

King receives condolences

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Sunday received cables of condolence from several countries, organisations and dignitaries over the passing away of King Hussein. King Abdullah received messages from the president of the Egyptian Labour Association's Public Union, Said Rashed, Al Azhar Sheikh Mohammad Said Tantawi, the presidents of Uganda, Nigeria, Croatia, Madagascar, Georgia, and Guinea, the prime ministers of Portugal and Canada, the president of the Organisation for African Unity, Bassam Ahmad Salem, the president of the Egyptian Liberal Socialists Party, Mahmoud Yasser Ramadan, the secretary general of the Islamic International Relief Agency, Adnan Ben Khalil Basha, and Arab Parliamentary Union Secretary General Nooruddine Boshkouj.

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Brazil explosion destroys city block

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — A powerful explosion ripped through a commercial area in a northwestern Brazilian city Sunday, seriously injuring five people and razing a city block. Brazilian media reported. The early morning explosion destroyed at least 42 stores and damaged nearby apartments and cars in the city of Uberlandia, 970 kms north-west of Rio de Janeiro. At least two victims were injured seriously and taken to a nearby hospital. According to the Uberlandia Fire Department, the explosion originated in a video game parlor. "We think it was caused by a short circuit, but we are not sure of anything yet," a fire fighter identified only as Sgt. Duarte told TV Globo News.

Two Pakistani policemen killed in clash with activists

MULTAN (AFP) — Two policemen were killed and three injured Sunday in a gun battle with activists of a sectarian group in Pakistan's Punjab province, police said. Police were attacked by "terrorists" from a Sunni Muslim group, Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan, as police intercepted their car in the village of Moza Daulatpur, 70 kilometres east of here, they said. The activists opened fire with automatic weapons and then took shelter in a nearby house, they said. Police returned fire, a police officer said, adding "exchange of fire is still continuing and we have called for reinforcement." Two policemen were killed on the spot, while three injured, one in critical condition, were hospitalised.

Briton kidnapped in Nigeria

WARRI (AFP) — A second British oil worker and his two-and-a-half year old son were kidnapped Sunday in Nigeria, a few days after a first Briton was taken hostage, an official working for his employers said. Martin Westbury and his young son were seized by three armed youths in Warri, southeast Nigeria, said an official working for Westbury's employer, the Anglo-Dutch oil giant Shell. The official, who asked not to be named, said the two were taken by the youths as they cycled at a jetty in Warri at 9:30 a.m. local time on Sunday.

'Colombian rebels free four hostages'

CARACAS (AFP) — Colombian leftist guerrillas freed four kidnapped engineers working for Venezuela's state oil company, a radio report said here Sunday. Union Radio said Emilio Camacho, Jesus Figueroa, Jorge Ramos and Miguel Guzman were freed in good health in a border region with Colombia where they were kidnapped by National Liberation Army (ELN) insurgents three weeks ago. ELN sources said the move was a gesture of goodwill to Venezuela's new President Hugo Chavez, who has supported peace talks between Colombian guerrillas and the government. The four engineers were among five people kidnapped while exploring for oil in Guafitas, in Venezuela's southwestern state of Apure.

Deer kills hunter

ORLEANS (AFP) — A French hunter was killed by a deer on Sunday during a hunt in the Loiret region. 80 kilometres south of Paris, local police said. The 68-year-old pensioner was charged by a stag and gored in the chest. He died instantly, police said.

King expresses confidence in Tarawneh government

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — His Majesty King Abdullah has asked the government of Fayez Tarawneh to carry on and renewed his confidence in the five-month-old administration, the premier said Sunday.

Speaking at Parliament yesterday, Tarawneh said the King expressed his confidence in the government when he received him earlier Sunday.

"His Majesty stressed his confidence in the government, which won the

approval of King Hussein and the Lower House," Tarawneh told the 80-member chamber.

The premier hinted that he offered his resignation to King Abdullah during their meeting at the Royal Court on Sunday, but the King "instructed me... to continue with my Cabinet team members with God's blessing based on the mandate laid out by King Hussein," Tarawneh said during the session.

"As the head of this government, I would like to express our feelings towards

His Majesty King Abdullah's confidence and pledge that we will move forward with all determination given by Almighty God to serve this country," the premier added.

"The King instructed me to convey his greetings and wishes for success [to Parliament]," Tarawneh told deputies.

The King's words ended days of rumours and speculation about a possible Cabinet change or reshuffle following the death of King Hussein.

During his statement to

Parliament, Tarawneh said the government is following up on "pledges" of economic assistance by friendly countries made in the past few days.

"We are sure that the results of all these contacts will be nothing but a cementing of ties with these countries," the premier added.

Tarawneh was referring to pledges of economic assistance to the Kingdom by foreign states, especially Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and the European Union.

Lower House pledges allegiance to King, calls for national unity

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Deputies on Sunday pledged allegiance to His Majesty King Abdullah and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hamzah and pledged full support for the Throne and the Royal family.

In a special session in memory of King Hussein, who died last week after an unsuccessful battle with cancer, the 80-member chamber also called for national unity to face all challenges facing the Kingdom.

"We declare a Jordanian, Arab, Hashemite and pure

"This is an allegiance that is free from weakness and hesitation. Loyalty to the soul of Al Hussein and to the great King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein," Majali, reading from a written statement, told the sombre Parliament.

The speaker described the King's death as a "shock" to the nation and urged Jordanians to stand united behind its leadership.

"Our hands are united together in order not to let anyone penetrate our fortress. God forbid, whether they are envious people or bounty seekers," the speaker told the deputies.

"We will safeguard our country and its achievements against any infiltrators, and we will unite against any out-bidding or penetration. Jordan

is in good shape, thank God, as far as we uphold our principles," he added.

Majali also expressed appreciation for the participation of the world leaders, especially the heads of Gulf Arab states, who took part in the funeral of the late King.

The session, the second since the passing away of King Hussein, was attended by Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and Cabinet members.

Hours after the death of King Hussein on Feb. 7, a joint session of the Lower and Upper Houses of Parliament was held during which King Abdullah took the oath as the fourth Hashemite King of Jordan.

Other lawmakers also extended their constituencies

allegiance to the King and called upon the nation to stand united behind him.

"We promise to be your faithful and loyal soldiers. Your Majesty," said Abdullah Jazi, a deputy representing southern bedouins.

Deputy Nayef Mula, a Circassian representing Amman, urged citizens to stand steadfast in order to overcome the challenges that face the country.

Deputy Khalil Ayyub described King Hussein's funeral as "clear evidence" of the respect the late King enjoyed among world leaders and described it as an "immortal political rally."

The Upper House is expected to hold a similar session today to commemorate the death of King Hussein.



His Majesty King Abdullah and HRH Princess Rania meet Sunday with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad and his wife at Raghadan Palace (Photo by Yousef 'Allan)

King receives Bahraini crown prince, Malaysian premier

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah received at Raghadan Palace on Sunday Bahraini Crown Prince Sheikh Hamad Ben Issa Al Khalifeh and his accompanying delegation, who arrived to offer condolences over the passing away of King Hussein.

The King expressed appreciation and gratitude to the Bahraini leadership for their brotherly feelings and expression of sympathy. King Abdullah and the delegation also discussed Jordanian-Bahraini relations.

Sheikh Hamad wished the King success in leading Jordan towards further progress.

Paying tribute to King Hussein, Sheikh Hamad said "his loss is felt not only in Jordan but also throughout the region and the Arab World."

"King Hussein worked in cooperation with Arab leaders in dealing with regional and international developments and in rallying the ranks of Arab states in the face of challenges," said Sheikh Hamad.

"The presence of a great number of world leaders at the late King's funeral reflects not only the distinguished status which King Hussein had acquired worldwide, but also the world community's determination to help Jordan and King Abdullah pursue the march of construction, development, stability and peace. This is a task to which Bahrain is also committed as part of pan-Arab action," added Sheikh Hamad.

"While congratulating King Abdullah on ascending to the Throne, Bahrain reassures that

Jordanian-Bahraini relations will continue to develop and strengthen further."

Upon his departure, the Bahraini crown prince sent a cable to King Abdullah expressing appreciation and good wishes for the success of the Hashemite Monarch.

Also Sunday, King Abdullah and HRH Princess Rania received at Raghadan Palace Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad and his wife, who are on a visit to present their country's condolences on the passing of King Hussein.

The King expressed appreciation and gratitude to the Malaysian leader and people for their sympathy.

Later, Mahathir and his wife visited the grave of King Hussein and recited verses of the Holy Koran.

Aziz arrives in Turkey amid complaints over U.S. use of airbases

ANKARA (AFP) — Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz came to Turkey Sunday to try to persuade Ankara to stop allowing U.S. and British warplanes to use its bases to patrol no-fly zones over Iraq.

The visit has met with unease on the part of the United States, which relies on the bases to carry out surveillance flights over the northern no-fly zone, and comes at a time of tension between Turkey and Iraq over the presence of the U.S. and British planes.

There have been clashes in the no-fly zones between U.S. planes and Iraqi air defences since Operation Desert Fox — four days of joint British and U.S. air strikes on Iraq in December.

In an interview in a Turkish newspaper Friday, Aziz said he would raise the question of U.S. and British planes using the Incirlik airbase in southern Turkey for patrol operations during his visit.

"The use of Incirlik air base by American planes to bomb Iraq is a blemish on Iraqi-Turkish relations. We must eliminate this blemish," Aziz said.

Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem on Sunday expressed hope that Aziz's visit would help improve bilateral relations, but said it would not change Ankara's policy on Iraq.

"We will meet Aziz with goodwill and warmth as befits a host. However, everyone should know that our policy will not change because of a visit," Cem was quoted by the Anadolu news agency as saying.

"There will be no change on

Incirlik. Our parliament has taken a decision on Incirlik and our government does not have an opposite stance," he said.

Cem also rejected reports that the Iraqi deputy premier's visit had led to tension between Ankara and Washington, which said on Thursday that it did "not understand Turkey's invitation to Aziz."

"Turkey has always called on Iraq to fully comply with U.N. resolutions," Cem said.

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit said earlier that Turkey would make "constructive proposals" for a solution to the Iraqi crisis.

Ecevit has previously said he was working on updating a plan for the region which he first prepared in 1996.

The plan includes reassuring Baghdad about its territorial integrity, lifting the trade embargo if Iraq complies with U.N. resolutions and helping to start a dialogue between Baghdad and Kurdish groups in northern Iraq.

The Turkish daily Cumhuriyet said Sunday that Turkey would also warn Iraq over what it sees as tolerance of Kurdish separatist rebels based in Iraq.

"We know that some Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) members are on Iraqi territory after being forced to leave Syria. We will surely discuss the issue tomorrow," Ecevit told reporters on Sunday in Ankara.

In October last year, Syria agreed not to allow PKK rebels to operate on its soil and shut down rebel camps after three weeks of tension with Turkey marked by threats of military action by Ankara.

Israeli, Palestinian troops in armed face-off

KISUFIM JUNCTION (AP) — Israeli and Palestinian troops faced off with guns on Sunday after coming to blows at an Israeli roadblock.

Israeli army troops parked a truck across the Gaza Strip's main north-south artery, shortly before a planned Palestinian protest against Israeli settlements in the area was to take place.

Palestinian security officers demanded that the Israelis move the truck. After some time, several Israeli and Palestinian troops exchanged punches.

Reporters watched as three Palestinian police raised their Kalashnikov rifles toward the two Israeli soldiers in the truck.

One Palestinian policeman mounted the hood of the truck and aimed his gun at the windshield. Another tried to open the door.

Each side, numbering about 40, deployed troops, guns raised, to the surrounding fields.

During the face-off, 250 Palestinian protesters arrived at the crossroad, hoisting a banner saying "No peace with settle-

ments." Some chanted, "You will not blot our land." After about 30 minutes, senior commanders from both sides arrived and ordered their troops to lower their guns and open the road.

The Israeli army said it only sought to keep the road open and said it held the Palestinian authorities responsible for the demonstrators' behaviour. It said the demonstration "violated agreements."

Khalid Abu Ula, the senior Palestinian officer in southern Gaza Strip, said the Palestinians were planning a

peaceful march.

"What happened today is part of the continued provocation by the Israeli army in southern Gaza and a deliberate escalation of tensions," Abu Ula said.

The main bloc of Jewish settlements in Gaza, housing about 7,000 Jewish settlers, is in the south of the Strip.

The Palestinians say continued Israeli settlement in Gaza and the West Bank violates peace accords. Israel says the fate of the settlements should be left for the final phase of negotiations.

In the West Bank on Sunday, clashes broke out in Beit Dazan village outside of Nablus after Israeli army troops began uprooting olive trees in local fields.

About 100 Palestinian students pelted troops with stones. The soldiers responded by firing rubber-coated steel bullets in the air. There were no injuries reported.

The Israelis claim that the olive grove, which is two kilometres outside of the village, is on state land.

The army would not comment on the clash.

Government's challenge in extended mandate remains economy

By Rana Sabbagh Gargour

AMMAN — Armed with renewed palace backing and public solidarity after the death of King Hussein, the government has to move swiftly to shape up the economy and to reassure Jordan's anxious neighbours it will not embark on major foreign policy changes.

His Majesty King Abdullah, in his first key decision since he took his oath seven days ago, Sunday asked Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh to continue with policies outlined in King Hussein's letter of designation to the current government after he appointed it on Aug. 20.

Officials also said the King asked Royal Court Chief Jawad Anani to stay on, at least for now — putting a damper on speculation among the capital's elite circles over imminent changes to the two key posts at the start of King Abdullah's reign following King Hussein's 46-year rule.

"With these decisions, His Majesty has buried all talk on immediate government and

Royal Court changes and showed that he meant what he said when he promised to be an extension of his father's

NEWS ANALYSIS

outlook and beliefs," said one analyst.

"Based on that, it appears that continuity, both on the internal and external front, will be the name of the game, at least for quite a while," he added.

When Tarawneh was appointed, he was asked by King Hussein then to combat poverty, unemployment, corruption and bureaucracy and to maintain good relations with Israel while further boosting ties with Arab and Muslim states.

Sources close to Tarawneh said the U.S.-educated economist, who led Jordan's team to the negotiations that culminated in the signing of the controversial 1994 peace treaty with Israel, was not considering a Cabinet reshuffle before the end of the current session of Parliament in late March.

"After that, some ministers might be replaced," one source told the Jordan Times.

With renewed Royal confidence in his 23-member team, many deputies and diplomats hope Tarawneh will be more assertive in taking key economic decisions, especially on privatisation, a potential minefield.

Tarawneh, 50, had come under fire from his opponents for failing to open a much-needed dialogue with the vocal Muslim-led opposition and to take bold decisions to stimulate economic growth in a recessionary atmosphere.

But his supporters credit him for "keeping the boat afloat" during a six-month period of uncertainty, sparked by the King's battle with cancer at a U.S. hospital, reporting both to the King at his sickbed and to HRH Prince Hassan at home.

Unlike his successor, Tarawneh managed to maintain reasonably good links with Parliament, did not use force to crack down on recent pro-Iraq demonstrations over U.S. missile strikes on Iraq

and did not fully implement the fiercely-opposed press law.

Officials said the government's key priority now was to translate into reality overwhelming international and Arab pledges of political, financial and economic support made during the King's funeral.

Together with King Abdullah, the government is expected to work on deepening Jordan's young democracy and freedoms, albeit gradually, and to separate state powers.

But many officials and politicians caution against exaggerating pledges of aid and economic recovery.

"The only concrete pledge of help so far has come from the United States," said a government source. "We have yet to see others carry out their promises... but as for now, everything remains sweet talk and bubbles in the air."

In the back of official thinking is popular frustration sparked by the failure of the much-promised economic dividends of peace with Israel to materialise.

By nearly every account, Jordan is most vulnerable in its economy, facing a nearly \$7 billion foreign debt, an amount greater than its gross domestic product (GDP).

One in every five Jordanians lives below the poverty line while unemployment is officially estimated at 16 per cent and independently at up to 27 per cent.

For now, the country appears to have passed with flying colours worries that nervousness over King Hussein's death could set off a crippling run on the dinar.

But a U.S. pledge to speed up payments of \$300 million in additional economic aid over 18 months and determination by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states to place undisclosed deposits at the Central Bank and to provide Jordan with oil at cut-rate prices appear to have averted that danger.

However, the Kingdom, a linchpin of regional stability, remains in dire need of debt relief.

(Continued on page 2)

Iraq objects to 'American spies' in disarmament panel

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An official Iraqi newspaper protested on Sunday over the inclusion of "spies for the United States" in a new 20-member U.N. disarmament panel.

While recalling Iraq has in any case dismissed all three U.N. panels set up to review ties with Baghdad, Al Jumhuriya slammed the inclusion in the disarmament board of "supposed experts who are among the best spies for the United States." It singled out four associates of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of dismantling Iraq: Britain's Rachel Davies, an expert in monitoring Iraqi exports and imports, Gabriele Krutz-Walsuck, a German chemical expert, Horst Reeps, also German and a biological expert, and ballistics expert Nikita Smidovich of Russia.

Babel, another official daily, also criticised the makeup of the disarmament panel set up

Arab League makes 'urgent' request to Syria for meeting on Iraq embargo

CAIRO (AFP) — The Arab League made an "urgent" request to Syria on Sunday to convene the planned meeting of the league's ministerial follow-up committee on lifting the embargo against Iraq.

Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdul Meguid told reporters here he had sent an "urgent message" to Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa, due to chair the meeting, to convene the ministers as soon as possible.

A league official who asked not to be named said earlier this month that the pan-Arab organisation had drafted a plan to work with China, France and Russia to end the embargo.

He said the plan centres on "serious" cooperation with China, France and Russia, the three permanent members of the U.N. Security Council which are opposed to maintaining the sanctions against Baghdad.

The proposal focuses on "the Arab World's total opposition to any attack on Iraq's territorial integrity and any interference in its internal affairs," the official said, adding that it would also call on Baghdad to "prove its good intentions toward Kuwait."

Iraq has been under U.N. sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait that led to the Gulf War.



Syrians raise a banner that reads 'Yes to our beloved [Syrian President] Hafez Assad' from the Syrian-controlled Golan Heights to people living in the village of Majdal Shams (opposite) located in the Israeli-occupied part of the Golan on Sunday to mark the 17th anniversary of the uprising of Syrians against Israel's annexation of the Heights (AFP photo)

Britain 'encouraged' over Lockerbie progress: Cook

PARIS (AFP) — Britain is encouraged by recent progress towards bringing to trial two Libyan suspects in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing, but won't be satisfied until they are handed over, Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said here Sunday.

Cook, here to push forward Kosovo peace talks being held near Paris, told reporters that Britain would not compromise on its position that should the pair be convicted they must serve their sentences in Scotland, where the plane crashed.

However, he repeated London's offer that U.N. inspectors could be allowed to monitor their imprisonment.

"I am not going to sigh with

relief until the two men touch down in the Netherlands," where all sides have agreed they could be tried, Cook said.

"But I am encouraged by the progress that has been made."

"After months of very hard efforts it looks as if we could be approaching the end of the game," Cook told reporters.

He said that last week he had met an aide of South African President Nelson Mandela, who has taken a keen interest in the case, and Saudi mediator Prince Bandar Ben Sultan to give them "a clear message that we could not compromise on the fact that the imprisonment has to be in Scotland, but that we were willing to look at the involvement of

Ocalan demands guarantee of safety during asylum appeals

ANKARA (AFP) — Fugitive Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan has demanded that his personal safety be guaranteed until his appeals for political asylum from Greece and Italy are concluded.

"With regards to our urgent appeal for personal safety and political status, I call on especially the people of Greece and Italy... to be sensitive and continue their efforts until a positive result is achieved," Ocalan said, in a statement carried by the Kurdish DEM news agency, based in Germany, late Saturday.

Ocalan, leader of the Kurdish

Labour Party (PKK), is wanted by Turkey on murder and terrorism charges linked to his group's campaign since 1984 for Kurdish self-rule in south-eastern Anatolia.

The PKK leader accused Ankara of trying to "conclude its genocide attempt against Kurds" with a plot against him.

He also condemned Moscow for brushing aside a decision by the Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, to grant him political asylum.

"I repeat my demand for this decision to be taken into account and be implemented," he said.

Ocalan, 49, has been looking for a host country since he was forced out of his long-term base in Syria in mid-October amid pressure from Ankara.

He was arrested in Rome in November last year on international arrest warrants but was released after Italy refused to extradite him to Turkey where he could face the death penalty.

The move sparked a bitter row between Ankara and Rome and a boycott of Italian goods in Turkey.

Ocalan left Italy in mid-January for an unknown destination and has since been searching for a country to take him in.

NEWS IN BRIEF

PFLP criticises Arafat over proposal

DAMASCUS (AFP) — One of the two leading Palestinian opposition factions said Sunday that Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's proposal for a confederation with Jordan was "destructive." The Damascus-based Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) described the idea as "fresh proof of the destructive policy followed by the Oslo group."

It said in a statement that the proposal furthered U.S.-Israeli plans, which were to ignore Palestinian national rights and "reach solutions to suit their own interests."

Metro passengers shown blue films, see red

CAIRO (AFP) — Passengers waiting innocently for trains in the Cairo metro were shocked to find themselves being entertained by pornographic film clips, police said Sunday. A mini "revolution" broke out at several busy stations on Friday when passengers saw the porn scenes on the closed-circuit television that is supposed to be used for showing advertisements. The head of the metro authority Mohammad Maher branded the incident that roused the fury of dozens of passengers at nine metro stations in Cairo as "a disaster."

Sentence shortened for convicted editor

TEL AVIV (AP) — The publisher of the Maariv newspaper was released from jail Sunday after serving two-thirds of his sentence for ordering wiretaps as part of a circulation war with a rival newspaper. Ofer Nimrodi was convicted of ordering wiretaps on the phones of senior staff at the rival Yedioth Ahronot daily. He was ordered to pay a fine of \$330,000 and began serving an eight-month sentence in October.

Netanyahu wants peace with Syria and Lebanon

LONDON (AFP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday said he wants a peace accord with Syria and Lebanon, in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). "We've got to make progress for a permanent settlement and peace with the Palestinians and additionally with Syria and Lebanon," Netanyahu said. "I hope there is an equal will on the various sides of parties," he added.

Hoss praises Hizbollah tactics

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanon's prime minister declared Sunday that the country "blesses" Hizbollah's guerrilla war against Israeli troops and pledged his government's support. "The resistance movement and its steadfastness in the face of the diabolic Israeli [war] mechanism... has transformed it into a force to be reckoned with," Prime Minister Salim Hoss said.

Government's challenge in extended mandate remains economy

(Continued from page 1)

"The economic issue and reducing the debt burden, whether through debt swaps, write-offs, rescheduling and other forms, is at the top of our agenda," a senior government official told the Jordan Times. "We are seeking institutional economic support, not a one-time shot in the arm."

Jordan will spend \$812 million in 1999 on repayment of interest and principal debt — up to 27 per cent of its GDP.

"Imagine the developmental effect the government could realise if part of this repayment was eased," he said.

Tarawneh, the official said, had met many envoys over the past few days to discuss Jordan's economic concerns.

"We are placing high hopes that the June meeting of the seven leading industrial nations, the G-7, will address the Jordanian debt issue in a serious way,

including rescheduling debt owed to Japan and Europe," added the official.

U.S. President Bill Clinton, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and French President Jacques Chirac, who attended King Hussein's funeral, have made "firm pledges to raise the debt issue in a comprehensive way at the June summit."

However, diplomats believe Jordan, likewise, has to do its homework to win more Western support.

"They have to further liberalise the economy, show us clear-cut development priorities and changes, including income tax reforms to ensure that rich Jordanians take part in generating their share in state revenue and in helping the country's poor," said one diplomat.

Officials also hope that some Western states would follow in the footsteps of the United States, which wiped away \$700 million in Jordanian debts in

1994 in recognition of its major role in helping Middle East peace.

An International Monetary Fund (IMF) team is in town working out a three-year draft macro-economic programme to replace the current 10-year reform plan which ends this month.

Officials say the deal, which will provide Jordan with over \$150 million a year in loans and allows debt rescheduling, will focus on deepening reforms and maintaining a budget deficit well below seven per cent of GDP as envisaged in this year's budget.

The Washington-based IMF board is expected to approve the programme in early March.

Jordan hopes Gulf states, facing depressed oil prices and economic troubles, will at least open up their markets to Jordanian products and labour and launch joint investments in the Kingdom.

In the first 10 months of last year, Jordan's overall exports to Arab states stood at JD387 million, with Iraq taking in JD91 million, followed by Saudi Arabia at JD86 million.

The government is also counting on Israel to ease security and other restrictions on trade with the Palestinian self-ruled areas, now standing at a modest \$20 million.

Turning to foreign policy, officials do not foresee any changes under King Abdullah, the first of a new generation of Middle East leaders. Syrian President Hafez Assad, an old guard leader who has long viewed Jordan with suspicion, made a surprise visit to Jordan to attend the funeral and pay homage to the late King, with whom he had differences over the years.

Both countries have pledged to open a new chapter in ties, which hit their lowest point in years after Jordan signed the treaty with Israel five years ago.

"We would like to engage [the Syrians] in a dialogue to understand each other better, but Jordan will refuse to be treated in a haughty manner by Syria," said one government source.

"Things have to be set on equal footing with the Syrians."

More support came from Saudi Arabia, the most powerful Arab Gulf state which turned against Jordan over its perceived pro-Baghdad stand during the 1990 Gulf crisis resulting from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Iraq, whose ties with Jordan have remained cool but cordial, sent a delegation headed by Vice President Taha Yassin Maroufi. It is expected to renew a 1999 annual trade protocol with Jordan later this month worth around \$190 million — lower than last year's \$250 million due to a drop in oil prices, not because of a cooling in political ties.

Despite tense links since Amman embraced top Iraqi

defectors in 1995 and began calling for change in Baghdad, Iraq has continued to supply Jordan with all its oil needs.

Both Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have pledged to support King Abdullah, who spent most of his youth as an officer in the army.

But politicians say possible rows over Palestinian-Israeli peace making will continue to cast the same shadow of the uncertainty that King Hussein faced throughout his reign.

Still, together with government officials, they have brushed aside speculation that Iraq and Syria could press Jordan into adopting a more anti-Israeli policy.

"Our foreign policy will continue along the same [traditional] lines of the past," said one official. "But if there are any extraordinary developments, we will act upon them in due course."

PRAYER TIMES

04:57Fajr
06:15(Sunrise) Doha
11:50Dhuhr
14:56Asr
17:25Maghrib
18:43Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweidieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Afrom Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5885897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4634932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646135
Church of Presentation, Sweidieh
Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757

The English-Language Catholic
Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church
4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department
of Meteorology

Moderate weather conditions will
prevail with winds northwesterly
light to moderate. In Aqaba,
winds will be northerly moderate
and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman04/16
Aqaba09/23
Deserts03/18
Jordan Valley08/22

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 17 Aqaba 23 Humidity
readings: Amman 27 per cent.
Aqaba 25 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following

areas:
Ajloun03/15
Jerash05/18
Um Qays06/18
Madaba04/16
Petra05/16
Dead Sea13/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Issam Asmar4890504
Dr. Khalid M'addi5661144
Dr. Nidal As'ad4751672
Dr. Abdul Rahim Mustafa 4744685

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Ruka Al Dawa Pharmacy5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Faysal Al Qadi02/248743
Fou'ad Pharmacy02/275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Shahin05/995710/Palestine
Pharmacy05/983562

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police192, 4631111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints489467
Amman Municipality Complaints
4787111
Telephone Information (directory
assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority5815615
Electric Power
4636381
RJ Flight Information44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special
Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdli5666131/7
Husseini Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Aklieh Maternity4643441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine Shmeisani
5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen477101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marika4891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital09/983335
Zarqa National Hospital09/900560
Ibn Sina Hospital09/986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital
09/990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital02/275555

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia International
Airport Tel. (44)53200-5,
where it should always be verified.
Information on other flights can be
supplied on phone 44 (52700).
Information on Royal Wings flights
can be supplied on phone
4873201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15Sanaa (RJ)
08:30Damascus (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:30New Delhi (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:30Beirut (RJ)
10:30Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:30Shannon, Chicago (RJ)
12:05Kuwait (RJ)
12:30Cairo (RJ)
20:00Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:15Tel Aviv (add) (RJ)
20:45Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights
08:20Alexandria (BA)
09:30Cairo (MS)
10:00Khartoum (SD)
13:20Bahrain (GF)
14:45Doha (QR)
15:05Vienna (OS)
15:25Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
17:50Istanbul (SD)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:15Frankfurt (LH)
22:25Tel Aviv (LY)
01:25Amsterdam (KL)
01:25Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
08:50Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
09:35 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)

Royal Wings (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Airport)
(RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Airport)
(RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)

23:05 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)



JORDAN'S MOURNING CONTINUES: Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Bint Talal prays over the burial site of His Majesty King Hussein who died last Sunday. She is the younger sister of the King. To her left is her husband, Walid Kurdi (AP photo)

Royal family visits King Hussein's burial site, Jordanians continue to offer condolences

AMMAN (J.T.) — Royal Family members Sunday visited the grave of King Hussein, who was buried at the Royal Cemetery last Monday.

The grave was visited by their Royal Highness Princesses Basma, Muna and Alia Al Faisal and they were followed by the president of the senate and the speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, senators, deputies, the higher judicial council, members of the Court of Cassation and the Supreme Court. They recited verses of the Holy Koran.

Among the visitors to the grave, were also Ministry of Education scouts and guides from around the Kingdom, school students and other citizens. They prayed that God would bless the King's soul.

Visitors to the Royal Court Sunday signed a condolence register to express their sympathy to the Royal Family and pledge allegiance to His Majesty King Abdullah and the Hashemite Throne.

In Zarqa, the governor's office Sunday started a daily meal programme for orphans and the poor in remembrance of the late King Hussein who, the governor's office said, through his directives to the government, had cared for the needy and the orphans and exercised social solidarity.

The meals were donated by local organisations and businesses and distributed to children under the care of a number of charitable organisations, said Omar Jamal, head of the Department of Awqaf in Zarqa. Jamal noted that free meals will be offered daily to 130 orphans and needy and handicapped children.

Minister of Social Development Mohammad Kheir Manser said in a statement published in the local press that a number of Jordanian families have decided to substitute ads in the local press, expressing grief on the passing of the King, with cash donations to the ministry to be spent on the care of orphans.

Speaking after a regular Cabinet meeting, Manser urged the public

to follow the example.

Meanwhile, the Council of Islamic Organisations and Societies in Jordan Sunday issued a statement paying tribute to King Hussein for his relentless efforts and sacrifices over the past 47 years.

The council called on Jordanians to join their ranks behind the Hashemite leadership. The council's secretary general, Abdul Latif Subeih, urged the Kingdom's statesmen and those in government positions to offer sincere advice to His Majesty King Abdullah on domestic reforms and inter-Arab cooperation.

Subeih voiced the council's congratulations to the King and wished him success in handling the numerous tasks ahead.

Also Sunday the Amman Chamber of Industry sent a cable to King Abdullah pledging allegiance and paying tribute to King Hussein's endeavours and achievements.

The chamber's chairman, Khaldoun Abu Hassan, said in the statement that under King Hussein, industry was boosted and contributed to 22 per cent of the country's overall gross domestic product. It employs 150,000 workers and accounts for 90 per cent of national exports.

Expressing the chamber's congratulations to King Abdullah, Abu Hassan said industrialists vow to safeguard the country's achievements.

Meanwhile, Her Majesty Queen Noor received a cable of condolence from the Egyptian Ancient Victoria Association in Alexandria. HRH Crown Prince Hamzah also received a cable of condolences from Chief Islamic Justice Sheikh Izzeddin Tamimi, who also conveyed congratulations to the prince, pledging loyalty and allegiance to the Hashemite Throne.

Christians dedicate prayers to King Hussein

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — Christians Sunday dedicated prayers, in solemn ceremonies at churches across Jordan, to His Majesty King Hussein.

Bishop of the Greek Catholic Church George Murr said, "Unusual days. The church today was full of Christians who all dedicated their prayers to King Hussein, asking God to grant him rest and to favour his son, King Abdullah in ruling the country."

Bishop Murr told his congregation that all Jordan's achievements were accomplished under the leadership of King Hussein.

Hospitals, schools, universities and social services extended across the country under his leadership, he said, adding that "King Hussein sacrificed his life for the sake of Jordan, the region's stability and the life of all generations."

"Widows, orphans and poor people were all supported by the King," he said. "It is really very sad losing such a compassionate human being."

Father Constantine Qarmash said "He was not just a king, he was a father, a brother and a friend for all Muslims, Christians and Arabs in general. He was a symbol of security and peace."

Bishop Saleem Sayegh, during a prayer at the St. Mary of Nazareth Church, said "King Hussein always supported the Palestinians, even when he was in his most critical health condition."

"He worked hard to ensure peace, safety and stability for the Palestinians in their homeland and in Jordan," Bishop Sayegh said.

"We raise our hands in supplication to God to help King Abdullah manage the country and, following in his father's footsteps, rule wisely and seek peace, stability and prosperity for Jordan."

Throughout the Christian community in Jordan pledges of support for the new leadership were heard.

Government campaigns for funds to publish Holy Koran

By a Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The government on Sunday launched a campaign to raise funds to publish one million copies of the Holy Koran in Jordan and worldwide upon a former request by His Majesty King Hussein.

Assistant to the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Secretary General Hamdi Murad said the ministry donated JD200,000 to the JD1 million project, which will be an alms giving donation in commemoration of King Hussein.

Murad told the Jordan Times that the rest of the amount was scheduled to be contributed by King Hussein himself, but now the ministry will open a bank credit to receive the donations.

He added that the ministry's "Beit Al Maqdes" (Jerusalem) print of the Holy Koran will be the model for the new copies, which will include some adjustments in the design.

Of great significance to Muslims throughout the world, King Hussein was the forty-second generation direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammad.

Last Monday, King Hussein was laid to rest following a resplendent funeral cortege through the streets of Amman that led to the Royal Palaces complex. Kings, presidents, and dignitaries from more than 50 countries joined grieving Jordanians from all walks of life in mourning the 63-year-old King, who reigned for nearly half a century.



CONDOLENCES: Women sign a special register at the Royal Court to express condolences to the Royal family on the death of His Majesty King Hussein. The register is open to the public from 10:00 a.m. till noon until March 18 (Petra photo)

Court orders suspension of Al Majd pending ruling against Rimawi

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The Court of First Instance yesterday suspended the publication of Al Majd weekly newspaper until a case against its chief editor is decided upon.

Al Majd Editor-in-Chief Fahed Rimawi was freed on bail last week pending trial. He is charged with insulting the Royal Family, publishing false information about the prime minister and other Cabinet members and attacking the security service in an article that appeared in the paper two weeks ago following His Majesty King Hussein's decision to change his successor to the Hashemite Throne.

Rimawi described the court's decision as "painful and undemocratic."

"This [closure] contradicts the government's promises of democracy and free speech," he said.

The government repeatedly affirmed its stated position of a soft imple-

mentation of the country's new Press and Publications Law that came into force last September.

The law — considered by many as one of the most restrictive on media ever drafted in the country — faced a storm of protests from journalists and human rights organisations both from Jordan and countries abroad, who regard the legislation as a violation of human rights because it contains articles that "limit personal freedom and freedom of expression."

Rimawi said the case could take as long as one year before it is concluded.

The court's order, the first of its kind since the press law was enacted, was issued based on a recommendation by the Press and Publications Department. Director of the Press and Publications Department Iyad Qattan was not available for comment yesterday.

According to Article 50 of the Press and Publications Law of 1998, the

court may suspend the publication while it hears the case, or for any period of time it deems necessary, or if it decides that such a move is in the benefit of national interest and national security.

Rimawi last week was ordered detained by the judge for 15 days but was only detained for two days in Jweideh prison before being released on Feb. 6.

Rimawi wrote in the Feb. 1 edition of Al Majd that HRH Prince Hassan, who was replaced as heir to the Throne by King Hussein last month, laid his revolver down in front of the King and asked to be shot if King Hussein thought he was a traitor. In previous issues Rimawi called for the Prime Minister and his Cabinet to resign.

According to Article 37, paragraph one of the law, a publication cannot print anything that disparages the King and Royal Family members. Paragraph two of the same article prohibits the publication

of anything that might violate national security. Paragraph nine — from the same article prohibits the publication of false information or rumours.

According to sources at Al Majd, the government also took exception to an article published in January on the Syrian elections, in which Rimawi lent support to Syrian President Hafez Assad in his presidential campaign.

Qattan said in an interview with the Jordan Times last week that the attorney general also charged Rimawi for showing loyalty to another country and leader.

According to a source from the newspaper, these are the first charges pressed against the newspaper, in accordance with the present law.

Hussein Mjalli, the newspaper's lawyer, said he is studying the newspaper's file in order to contest the court order.

Arab associations reschedule regional meeting; bombardment on Iraq to top agenda

By Mohammad Ben Hussein

AMMAN — The Arab Professional Associations are scheduled to hold a long overdue conference later this month in Baghdad, said Bassem Dajani, chairman of the Jordanian Professional Associations' 14-member executive council.

The 100,000-strong professional associations had planned a meeting of their colleagues across the Arab World to encourage their governments to "bust" United Nations economic sanctions on Iraq after recent U.S.-British air strikes, but the meeting

was postponed after the death of King Hussein.

It is not yet clear how many Arab unions will take part in the two day conference, scheduled for Feb. 27-28.

The four-day strikes that ended on Dec. 19 sparked demonstrations throughout the Arab World in support of Iraq, but until now, all Arab governments abided by the economic sanctions imposed by the U.N. on Baghdad following its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Arabs must do something to save Iraqis from their current plight," Dajani told the Jordan Times.

"Arab countries are contributing to these deadly sanctions and they have to stop participating in this crime that is committed against their Arab brethren," he added.

Organisers said the idea of a parley to reflect popular Arab anger over what has come to be known as "U.S.-British aggression on Iraq," was raised during a meeting of the association's executive committee in late 1998.

The associations, long a bedrock of popular support for the Iraqi people, have launched a vocal media campaign to enlist mass solidarity with Iraq over

last December's bombardment.

They are also collecting money, medicine and other in-kind donations from members, who include nurses, doctors, engineers, vets, lawyers and pharmacists.

Associations called on their members across the Kingdom to boycott all American and British-made products, including medicines, in protest of the strikes.

According to Dajani, the fourteen members of the executive council will take part in the conference.

Royal Wings to add third flight to Gaza airport

AMMAN (J.T.) — Royal Wings, a subsidiary of Royal Jordanian, the national air carrier, announced plans to operate another regular flight between Amman and Gaza airports in the coming week, bringing to three the number of regular flights between Jordan and the Palestinian self-rule areas.

Ahed Quntar, Royal Wings director general, said that in addition to Friday and Monday flights, Royal Wings will operate a third regular flight on Wednesdays in view of the

growing demand on air travel between the two sides.

Quntar said demand for travel between the two destinations has grown since Royal Wings made its maiden flight to Gaza airport last December, noting that the demand has been strong from both businessmen and tourists.

Royal Wings is examining the prospect of operating a daily flight between Amman and Gaza beginning this summer.

Last November, RW made its inaugural flight from Amman to Gaza carrying HRH Prince Faisal, who represented Jordan at the inauguration ceremony.

Amman to Gaza.

Meanwhile, CAA Director General Captain Jasser Ziyad was quoted by Al Dustour Arabic daily Saturday as saying that a total of 70 aeroplanes from around the world touched down at the Queen Alia International Airport in one day, carrying heads of Arab and foreign nations to attend the funeral of His Majesty King Hussein.

He said although Jordanian airports are not used to heavy air traffic, the traffic was dealt with successfully.

Government allocates JD98 million to social productivity programme

AMMAN (J.T.) — The government Saturday decided to allocate JD98 million to finance infrastructure projects in underprivileged areas as part of the social productivity programme, a senior official said.

"We reviewed the social productivity programme, which was one of the main issues that His Majesty King Hussein urged the government to focus on, because it deals with two major problems in Jordan — poverty and unemployment," said Minister of Planning Nabil Ammari.

"This has been discussed thoroughly in the past, and today we have covered new parts," Ammari added. He said the government has already begun implementing projects listed in the three components of the programme, but that "the

fourth component covering the finance of all infrastructure needed in camps and rural areas will be implemented in parallel with the other three areas."

Ammari said the government has put the social productivity programme at the top of its spending agenda. The government last year allocated JD400 million for financing the projects.

The ambitious programme was approved by the government in 1997 and has four components. Ammari was frank in admitting that "it will not be and poverty and unemployment in Jordan."

Officially unemployment stands at more than 16 per cent. The average income is about JD1,800 per year.

Ammari said the four components will cost about JD400 million

and include an extension of the Aid to the Elderly Programme administered through the National Aid Fund. The fund also gives aid to those unable to work.

The second component aspires to improve infrastructure services in impoverished areas throughout the Kingdom, whether camps or rural and urban poor areas. The third component will rehabilitate the unemployed to make them able to participate in economic activities. The final component will finance small and medium-scale enterprises that will raise income and help reduce unemployment.

"A prerequisite to finance these projects is that all employees should be Jordanian," said Ammari.

Police investigate murder

AMMAN (J.T.) — Criminal Prosecutor Bassem Momani has charged a 26-year-old man with first degree murder in the slaying of his brother-in-law in Jabal Qusour on Saturday, according to official sources.

The source said the suspect, whom he would not identify, was arrested by police shortly after stabbing the 36-year-old victim to death.

Head of the National Institute for Forensic Medicine Mo'men Hadidi told the Jordan Times Monday evening that the victim received at least nine stabs to different parts of his body with a switchblade.

According to the source, family problems are believed to be the motive of the killing.

Police said they are investigating the incident.

Albright meets Milutinovic, delivers stern message

RAMBOUILLET, France (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright delivered a stern message to Serbian President Milan Milutinovic Sunday, urging the Serbs to get down to business at the Kosovo peace talks or face NATO bombs.

With a Feb. 20 deadline for reaching an accord with Kosovo Albanians approaching, Albright arrived in France Saturday night to assess the progress of the talks that started a week earlier in a 14th-century French chateau in Rambouillet, near Paris.

Albright met with Milutinovic Sunday morning in Paris and later in the day was to travel to Rambouillet to meet the international mediators, led by American Christopher Hill, and the two parties. State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said Albright "is going to deliver a very clear and straightforward message to both parties that it is time to get down to the business of

making the tough decisions."

Again raising the threat of force, Rubin said Albright would tell the Serbian president that "if the Serbs are the cause of a breakdown, we are determined to go forward with a NATO decision to carry out air strikes."

The Serbs are faced with two uncomfortable choices, bend to the will of the United States and its five Contact Group partners, or face destructive air attacks. The Serb delegates have yet to receive instructions from their leader, Slobodan Milosevic, on which way to move.

"What Milosevic says will be crucial and carried out," said a Serb negotiator who was under orders not to speak to the media on the record.

More than 2,000 people have been killed in a year of clashes in Kosovo between ethnic Albanian separatists and Serbian security forces. The province is in southern Serbia, the dominant Yugoslav republic.



U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (centre), British Foreign Minister Robin Cook (left) and French counterpart Hubert Vedrine discuss at their arrival to the Chateau de Rambouillet to push forward the Kosovo peace negotiations between ethnic Albanians and Serbs (AFP photo)

Ninety per cent of Kosovo's 2 million people are ethnic Albanian; the majority want independence from Yugoslavia.

Just outside the talks Saturday, an estimated 10,000 Kosovo Albanians, many of them bussed from other European countries, demonstrated, carrying flags and shouting "U-C-K, U-C-K," the Albanian acronym for the Kosovo Liberation Army.

In Kosovo, meanwhile, a

bombing injured at least nine people outside a government-owned bank Saturday.

Both sides were forced to the negotiating table in France by the threat of NATO air strikes against Serbia and tough measures to cut off arms and financing for the KLA.

Foreign mediators said the Serbs are stalling the talks, demanding that Kosovo Albanians first sign a set of basic principles that guaran-

tee Yugoslavia's territorial integrity.

The secessionist Albanians refuse. They are asking for foreign mediators' assurances that Kosovo have a referendum on independence after a proposed three-year interim period.

Ignoring repeated official Serb rejection of any foreign troops in Kosovo, NATO allies are moving ahead with plans to dispatch up to 30,000 troops to

police an eventual deal.

President Bill Clinton announced Saturday that the United States is prepared to contribute as many as 4,000 ground troops.

The proposed three-year interim peace plan for Kosovo would give self-rule to the ethnic Albanians but would keep them within Yugoslavia. It would also compel the Serbs to withdraw their troops and police units except for a small force to guard the border.

Blair vows to send troops to Kosovo if peace pact agreed

LONDON (AFP) — Britain is willing to send troops to the Serbian province of Kosovo, but only if the operation's mission is clear and based on a peace pact, Prime Minister Tony Blair said Sunday.

"I will not agree to deploy British troops in Kosovo itself without a clear mission and clear objectives based on a political settlement agreed by both sides," Blair wrote in a forum in the Independent Sunday.

Blair's comments came as diplomats convened in France to take stock of peace talks to end nearly one year of fighting in the majority Albanian province that has left 2,100 people dead and displaced some 300,000.

A blueprint accord, drawn up by the six-nation Contact Group, would give Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority substantial auton-

omy for an interim period of three years but leave the province within the rump Yugoslavia.

Some 30,000 troops would oversee an eventual peace accord.

Of those, Britain has pledged some 8,000, along with Challenger tanks, bulletproof Warrior vehicles and heavy artillery that will leave Germany, where they are stationed, Monday.

The United States also said it would contribute 4,000 U.S. troops to take part in an international force to help enforce a peace accord in Kosovo.

"Our responsibilities do not end at the English Channel," Blair said, stressing Britain's desire not to revisit Bosnia.

"In Bosnia we underestimated what would be needed to halt the conflict, and we underestimated the consequences of failing to do so," he wrote.

"That is why Britain and France, along with our European, American and Russian partners in the Contact Group are united in our determination to bring peace in Kosovo," Blair said.

"These troops are not going to Kosovo to fight the Serbs," he said. "They will go to underpin an agreement," Blair said.

"It will not be easy for the two sides to achieve peace. But each side knows that, we will come down hard on them if they deliberately obstruct a reasonable agreement," he warned.

Belgrade has rejected deployment of foreign soldiers in Kosovo and insisted on written guarantees that its borders remain intact, while hardliners in the Kosovar delegation insist that any agreement must eventually lead to independence.

Balkans, new battlefield in Taiwan-China tussle

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — Having gained a diplomatic coup by establishing ties with Macedonia, Taiwan hopes to upgrade relations with other Balkan countries to counter China's diplomatic blockade, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Several countries in the Balkan peninsula, including the former Yugoslav republic of Slovenia, have expressed an interest in improving ties with Taiwan, the Liberty Times reported.

Taiwan wants to use its new relations with Macedonia to demonstrate how recognising the island can pay off for other financially-strapped countries in the Balkan peninsula, the

paper said.

In exchange for diplomatic recognition, Taiwan reportedly offered to provide Macedonia more than \$300 million in aid over four years, along with technical assistance, loans and business contracts worth millions more.

Macedonian sources have said ties with Taiwan would bring in up to \$1.6 billion in aid and investment.

Macedonia and the Vatican are the only countries in Europe that recognise Taiwan, which China claims as a breakaway province.

China severed ties with Macedonia after its decision to recognise Taiwan last

month, and reports say Beijing's anger at the move could delay gradual steps to restore regular dialogue between Taipei and Beijing.

Most of Taiwan's 28 allies are poor countries in Africa, Central America and the Caribbean who it supports with aid and investment.

Taiwanese Foreign Minister Jason Hu plans to visit Macedonia later this month, and may take the opportunity to stop over in another European country that does not recognise Taiwan, the paper said.

Vice President Lien Chan and Premier Vincent Siew have also expressed an interest in visiting Macedonia.

Yeltsin congratulates North Korean leader on birthday

SEOUL (AP) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin is among the foreign dignitaries who have congratulated North Korea on the upcoming birthday of its leader, Kim Jong Il, Pyongyang's media said Sunday.

Kim turns 57 Tuesday, and the day is celebrated as the North's biggest holiday. It will be Kim's first birthday since he officially took control of North Korea last September as chairman of the National Defence Commission.

The North's Korean Central News Agency said Yeltsin sent a congratulatory telegram Friday, hoping that Moscow-Pyongyang relations will be strengthened under Kim's leadership.

"I am convinced that developing Russia-DPRK (North Korea) relationship ... conforms with the interests of the peoples of the two countries, and it will help consolidate peace and stability on the Korean peninsula and

Northeast Asia," the KCNA quoted Yeltsin's telegram as saying.

Moscow was a longtime Communist ally of North Korea. But their relations have chilled since the former Soviet Union established diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1990.

Representatives from more than 16 overseas organisations arrived in Pyongyang Saturday for Kim's birthday celebrations, according to the North's official Radio Pyongyang and Korean Central Radio, monitored by Radio Press in Tokyo Sunday.

The well-wishers included members of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, a pro-North Korea group in Japan, as well as members of the Communist Party of Ireland, the Unified Communist Party of Italy and Cambodia's FUNCINPEC party, Radio Press reported.

Representatives also came on behalf of organisations in

Mongolia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China and the United States, it said.

Major birthday celebrations, as reported by the North's media, included sports events, song festivals, oratorical contests and mass rallies, during which government, party and military officials swore loyalty to their leader.

During one rally held on top of Mount Paekdu Saturday, representatives of the three military branches resolved to become "death-defying corps" and "suicidal soldiers," KCNA said.

North Korea says that Kim was born at a secret camp on top of Mount Paekdu bordering China in 1942 when his father, the late President Kim Il Sung, was waging an independence fight against Japanese colonialism.

But Western historians believe that the junior Kim was born in Russia's far eastern region close to the Korean peninsula.

Politician who endured bloody upheaval in 1970s dies

BANGKOK, Thailand (AP) — Prasit Kanchanasawat, a prominent politician in the bloody upheaval that rocked Thailand in the 1970s, died Sunday of cancer, hospital officials said. He was 84.

A commoner who served in both military and civilian governments filled with aristocrats, Prasit was a lawyer and banker before becoming a member of parliament in 1952.

Prasit held several high-level economic posts in the 1960s before becoming commerce minister in 1972 under the premiership of Field Marshal Thanom Kittakachorn.

Thanom's government was overthrown in a mass uprising against military rule in 1973.

A fragile experiment with democracy ensued. Prasit was speaker of a first, short-lived elected parliament in

1975. New elections in April 1976 led to Seni Pramoj, leader of Thai resistance against Japanese occupation in World War II, became prime minister.

Prasit was justice minister in Seni's government, which fell in October 1976 as the military and right-wing extremists massacred leftist students and staged a coup.

The coup ended Prasit's political career.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Spanish king and queen leave for South Africa

MADRID (AFP) — Spanish King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia left Madrid Sunday for South Africa for an official four-day visit, to be followed by a visit to Namibia. The royal couple will meet South African President Nelson Mandela as well as visiting the National Assembly, Kruger national park and the former prison at Robben Island where Mandela was incarcerated for 18 years. The king and queen will travel on to Namibia Friday, where they will meet President Sam Nujoma. They will return to Madrid next Sunday. Accompanying the royal couple is Foreign Minister Abel Matutes as well as 50 Spanish business leaders.

South African government to crack down on firearms

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — The South African government is to crack down on firearms by banning fully automatic weapons and the sale of toy guns that look like the real thing, police said Sunday. It will also force the public to reapply for licences for the country's estimated 2.2 million legal weapons, police legal services director Ric de Caris told the Johannesburg Sunday Times. De Caris said a task team appointed by Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi would meet in Pretoria Monday to begin drafting legislation that would rewrite the rule book on firearm ownership. The Arms and Ammunition Act is expected to be amended during the current session of parliament to restrict gunowners' ability to lend their firearms to others, he added. The blanket ban proposed in the new legislation would outlaw fully automatic weapons such as the Russian-made AK-47 and South African-made R1s, R4s and R5s, which are commonly used in bank robberies and acts of political violence. New measures the task team is expected to propose includes forcing all gunowners to reapply for licences, more thorough screening of applications for firearm licences and banning ammunition capable of penetrating protective clothing. De Caris said police were drafting a proclamation that will ban certain types of toy guns. Mufamadi said in parliament this week that 20,000 South Africans with criminal records had firearm licences that had not been revoked.

New religious riot hits eastern Indonesia; 13 killed

AMBON, Indonesia (AP) — Troops opened fire on rampaging gangs of Muslims and Christians in eastern Indonesia Sunday, a local official said. At least 13 people were killed. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said 11 of the dead had been shot and two others stabbed when rioting broke out on Haruku Island, in Maluku province about 2,250 kilometres northeast of Jakarta. He said troops opened fire to disperse the crowd. Last week in the capital Jakarta, armed forces commander Gen. Wiranto announced that he had ordered his troops to shoot troublemakers on sight so as to quell rising civil unrest. Meanwhile, about 43 injured people were taken by boat to the nearby provincial capital, Ambon. About 30 houses were burned. The official said the fighting was between groups from two rival villages with different religions. Earlier, state-owned radio said seven people had been killed and 14 people injured in Sunday's violence. Last month at least 105 people were killed and almost 3,000 homes and buildings were burned when Muslims and Christians clashed during a three-week period on three islands in Maluku province. Indonesia is the world's most populous Islamic nation. Maluku, which was known in Dutch colonial times as the Spice Islands, has a large Christian population. Indonesia, facing its worst economic crisis in decades, has been plagued by political and social unrest.

Over 1,000 Thai couples register marriages on Valentine's Day

BANGKOK (AFP) — More than 1,000 Thai couples registered their marriages in Bangkok's "Love Village" Sunday to mark Valentine's Day, city officials said. Staff at the registration office in downtown Bangkok (love village) said they would work into the night to register queues of lovers on their special day. "People choose to marry here because of the auspicious name of the district," local official Arunee Rasamit said. "Up to now, 1,050 couples have successfully registered their marriage licences and we have handed out more than 1,200 application forms." Many of the couples were married in traditional ceremonies years before but decided to certify their vows on Valentine's Day. Last year the district registered 947 marriages on Feb. 14. Earlier Sunday 99 couples were married in a mass traditional ceremony organised in a downtown hotel and presided over by city Governor Bhichit Rattakul. The governor wished them long love and asked them to be faithful to each other.

Police station fire death toll reaches 51

MOSCOW (AFP) — The death toll in one of the deadliest fires to ravage post-Soviet Russia reached 51 Sunday as rescuers pulled still more bodies from a gutted police station in the Volga city of Samara. ITAR-TASS reported. Another 18 people remained unaccounted for while 121 people were reported injured. The devastating blaze broke out Wednesday evening and instantly engulfed a five-storey interior ministry building in the central Russian city, sending several people jumping out of windows to their deaths. Some 230 firefighters spent 12 hours battling the flames. About 70,000 people Saturday turned out for the funeral of 20 of the victims, most of them police officers and crime detectives. Russian Interior Minister Sergei Stepashin, master cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and musician Galina Vishnevskaya, attended the funeral services held in a city stadium. Police have opened an inquiry amid strong suspicions of arson. Residents have said they heard two explosions shortly before the blaze erupted. The Interfax news agency meanwhile cited witnesses as saying that the blaze had broken out at three places within the building at once. Arson has not been ruled out as the cause of the blaze. The 1930s-era police station was hit by a blaze seven years ago but it was quickly brought under control and few efforts were apparently made to tackle the fire hazards in the building.

Clinton trial transcripts: Sex, lies and videotape

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Senators spoke bluntly, emotionally and weren't above cracking a joke when the doors were closed in U.S. President Bill Clinton's impeachment trial, newly released transcripts show.

Their words were also personal and direct, showing why the Senate is known to many Americans as the most exclusive private club in the nation.

"We must remember that the fooling around was between consenting adults, both of them sexually experienced," drawled Democrat Ernest Hollings of South Carolina.

Lawmakers debated long and hard over whether to hold their deliberations in private or to open them to the public.

Saturday the remarks of 75 Senators were published in the Congressional Record, and picked up by most major U.S. newspapers Sunday.

"Today is my 38th day as a Senator," said Republican Peter Fitzgerald, newly-elected from Illinois. "Those 38 days feel like they have lasted my entire life."

For 20 hours over four days last week, the Senate conducted its debate entirely behind closed doors, deciding whether Clinton should be the first U.S. president ever removed from office.

"We are seeing right now why I had to make my money selling frozen peas," said Oregon Republican Gordon Smith, a food wholesaler in another life, reacting to the high-powered legal talent that had argued the issue on both sides.

Ben Nighthorse Campbell, a Colorado Republican, took a jab at colleagues for running out during recesses to be interviewed by waiting journalists.

"I sit right there in the back row, 15 feet from the cloakroom," Nighthorse Campbell said of his desk near the exit doors.

"But at each recess, by the time I walk to the cloakroom and glance at the TV, some of my colleagues have already sprinted somewhere else to be in front of the cameras," he said.

"As you know, I used to be on the U.S. Olympic Team, and I tell my speedy friends — you could have made the team."

Democrat Byron Dorgan of North Dakota touched on the carnival aspect of the Monica Lewinsky sex-and-lies scandal.

"Mark Twain once said, with tongue in cheek, that 'the next best thing to a lie is a true story no one will believe,'" Dorgan said.

Democrat Patrick Leahy of Vermont told of writing his thoughts on the case onboard Air Force One for the long flight with Clinton returning from the funeral of King Hussein.

Not all addresses were as human — some had the feel of court submissions, while others tried to cram in as many learned, historical and famous figures as they could.

Many Democrats were pleased to quote one of the House managers, Representative Lindsey Graham, who said "reasonable people" could disagree on whether to remove the president.

"Well, this sorry chapter in our rich history embraces both. Lies, yes! And truth that is almost unbelievable."



Indonesian opposition politician Megawati Sukarnoputri is overwhelmed as she holds her party's new flag at a party rally in Jakarta. More than 100,000 supporters crowded into a stadium to endorse her candidacy for the presidency (AFP photo)

Presidential candidate rejects East Timor independence plan

JAKARTA (AP) — Presidential candidate and daughter of Indonesia's nationalistic founder Megawati Sukarnoputri denounced a government offer to grant independence to East Timor as a threat to national unity Sunday.

"We were shocked with the plan to let East Timor go," she said in a speech to about 100,000 red flag-waving supporters of her Indonesian Democratic Party in Struggle at a Jakarta sports stadium.

"The East Timorese are our brothers. So why should the East Timorese people go? Indonesia has always been a united country in the past," she said to the roar of the crowd.

Indonesia, which invaded East Timor in 1975, has offered to let the half-island territory break away if its people reject an autonomy plan now being considered at U.N.-sponsored talks with Portugal.

Last week, Indonesian

President B.J. Habibie indicated that he favoured independence by as early as the start of next year.

Other Indonesian officials have said they want the East Timorese people to opt for an autonomous state within the Indonesian republic.

June's poll is to be conducted under reforms that have swept away many political controls put in place by former President Suharto who quit office last May after 32 autocratic years in power.

The election is expected to be the most open since 1955.

Sunday's huge rally was a prelude to campaigning for the June 7 parliamentary election.

At the noisy gathering Megawati unveiled a new logo and relaunched the party, which was bitterly divided in the final years of the Suharto era after she called for greater democracy.

Some Western diplomats say

Megawati might try to intervene in the East Timor peace process if she gains big support at the poll.

Megawati is the daughter of Sukarno, a fierce nationalist who pursued expansionist policies during the 1950s and early 1960s before he was forced from power after an abortive communist coup.

She is expected to be a front runner for the presidency when a special assembly chooses a new head of state in November. The assembly is also expected to decide East Timor's status.

Meanwhile Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Carlos Belo has called for an immediate referendum on East Timor's future. He also accused rival factional leaders of not representing the people's wishes, a newspaper reported Sunday.

The Jakarta Post quoted Belo as saying leaders, such as himself, jailed pro-independence

rebel commander Alexandre Jose "Xanana" Gusmao and others, had made their views known to the Indonesian government, even though they do not represent the majority of East Timorese.

"Who says they represent the people?" East Timor's Roman Catholic bishop was quoted as saying. "The most relevant thing now is that all East Timorese speak up." Indonesia has consistently rejected calls for a referendum saying that it would trigger deep divisions within East Timorese society and could lead to civil war. But it has not said how the views of East Timor's people can be judged without a ballot.

There have already been some deadly clashes between rival armed groups.

Belo, who was the co-winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, called on all factions to settle their differences peacefully.

Buddhists mount peace drive in Sri Lanka as fighting kills 16

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's influential Buddhist clergy has escalated a campaign to woo warring Tamil rebels to peace talks even as 16 guerrillas were killed in fresh fighting, officials and political sources said Sunday.

The monks said they had visited areas held by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and held discussions on resolving the conflict that has claimed over 55,000 lives since 1972.

The renewed attempts to forge peace came as the defence ministry said 16 rebels had been killed in three separate gun battles since Friday.

The ministry said in a statement that 15 of the rebels were killed Saturday while another was shot dead Friday in fresh fighting in the north of the country where the rebels are fighting government forces.

A spokesman for the clergy said Sunday that they planned a public demonstration here on Feb. 26 to urge the authorities to open negotiations and end

the fighting.

"We feel that the people are fed up with this war and they are willing to talk peace," said Kamburugamuwe Vajira, a monk who led the Buddhist delegation that was also accompanied by Roman Catholic clergy.

He said they held talks with several rebel leaders.

A pro-government layman who accompanied them said they impressed on the minority Tamils in Tiger-held areas that the majority Buddhists were not against a peaceful end to the conflict.

"They had an image that it was the Buddhist clergy who were opposed to peace," said Tissa Vitharana. "This visit helped to change that image."

Sections of the country's Buddhist leadership had taken a hard line, advocating there should be no talks with the rebels until they agreed to surrender their arms and end fighting.

That position toughened after the January 1998 bomb-

ing of the country's most sacred Buddhist shrine, the Temple of the Tooth, in the central town of Kandy. A day after the bombing, the government outlawed the LTTE.

However, delegates on the latest peace mission said the Tiger guerrillas were "sorry" about the attack against the holiest Buddhist temple.

Roman Catholic Bishop Malcolm Ranjith said they did not discuss political issues during the visit but hoped the exchange would lead to a better understanding and a solution to the conflict.

The bishop said they hoped to meet political leaders here in a bid to further the cause of peace.

The Tamil Tiger guerrillas offered peace talks in November with the involvement of a third-party mediator but the government has said the attached conditions were unacceptable.

Army chief Srilal Weerasooriya said the Tigers were insisting on a troop with-

drawal to clear the way for talks but the military was against any pullout from areas taken from the Tigers at heavy loss of life.

There had been several peace bids in the past 15 years but all ended in failure and led to more bloodshed.

The multi-religious National Alliance for Peace said it was calling a meeting here Tuesday to escalate calls for a fresh peace initiative to end the country's drawn-out bloodshed.

"Now that the LTTE leadership has indicated some readiness for a dialogue, however, limited and conditional this may be, a positive response from the government supported by the opposition is necessary," the alliance said.

It said the October initiative of the country's trade and commerce chambers to bring about a bipartisan approach to end the fighting appeared to be stalled.

Beijing talks fail to resolve abode row with Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — Top-level talks in Beijing failed to resolve a row with China over a Hong Kong court ruling granting mainland children the right to live here, sparking renewed fears Sunday for the independence of the territory's courts.

Justice Secretary Elsie Leung said after meeting Chinese officials in Beijing that they thought parts of the ruling granting the right of abode to all children of Hong Kong residents were unconstitutional and a mistake.

Leung said the Chinese officials had questioned the Hong

Kong court's interpretation of legislation drawn up by China's parliament, the National People's Congress (NPC).

"They are very concerned and are questioning the ability of the court to interpret the actions of the NPC Standing Committee," she said Saturday.

"They think this is against the constitution and the Basic Law and that this mistake has to be corrected," she added. Her comments raised new concerns here for the territory's judiciary independence from Beijing, which has guaranteed the former British territory 50 years of

autonomy following the July 1997 handover under a "one country, two systems" scheme.

Leung's statement held "extremely negative" implications for the judicial independence of Hong Kong, said Gladys Li, who represents the International Commissions of Jurists.

"If you look at the Basic Law, and the Basic Law is promulgated by the National People's Congress, there is no doubt whatsoever that the Court of Final Appeal has the right to interpret the Basic Law. It is required to do so," she said,

referring to the territory's mini-constitution.

Li said the row over the court's ruling was the first serious crisis here since the handover and cautioned both the territory's leaders and Beijing to consider carefully being taking any action.

Leung did not indicate Saturday how the Court of Final Appeal's ruling would be corrected, saying merely the issue had to be studied.

But pro-democratic legislator Emily Lau expressed concern that Beijing would try to overturn the ruling.

Indonesia to allow 'reasonable' transition period for East Timor

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia will allow for a "reasonable period of transition" if the people of East Timor opt for independence, a close advisor to President B.J. Habibie was quoted as saying Sunday.

"We don't want to be accused of being as irresponsible as Portugal which left East Timor in the lurch years ago," the Indonesian state Antara news agency quoted the advisor, Dewi Fortuna Anwar as saying.

Anwar, speaking in an interview with Antara in the Australian capital of Canberra, said she had conveyed that message to Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer Thursday.

"Downer seemed rather surprised by the Indonesian decision and the latest statement (by Habibie)," Anwar said referring to Habibie's statement last week that he would like to see the East Timor issue settled by

January 2,000.

Canberra, she said, seemed "afraid East Timor will be a new burden on Australia which is already having to assist Papua New Guinea."

To Indonesia, letting East Timor go would be the "better alternative" because Jakarta would be relieved of a burden. Moreover the cold war that had caused East Timor to "integrate with Indonesia" was now over, Antara quoted her as saying.

However, Anwar did not elaborate on how Indonesia would or could provide for the transition period, nor how long it might be.

Publication of the Anwar interview Sunday coincided with comments by Australian Prime Minister John Howard Sunday in which he said immediate independence for East Timor would impose a crushing financial burden on Australians.

He also said it could lead

to a greater independence push in other Indonesian territories such as Irian Jaya, saying the government would prefer a period of autonomy for East Timor before it gained full independence.

"A quickly independent Timor would be very vulnerable and very weak, there will be a lot of pressure on Australia to provide a lot of help," he told Channel Ten's Meet The Press programme.

Habibie's announcement last week that he wants Indonesia to be rid of East Timor by January next year has alarmed Howard, who fears a return to the civil war that preceded Indonesia's 1975 invasion.

He said Sunday it was too early to get into specifics on costs to Australia but Australians must be aware there would be a cost.

"We are dealing with a situation where if there were quick independence for

Timor then we could well be expected by the bulk of the international community to carry the bulk of the aid," he said.

"We would be willing to play our part but I want the Australian people to understand that it could be quite expensive."

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer is to hold urgent discussions on the disputed province with Habibie in Jakarta on Feb. 25.

He is also expected to meet prominent East Timorese leaders in coming weeks, including Nobel laureate Jose Ramos Horta and senior members of the Fretilin resistance group.

Indonesian troops invaded East Timor in 1975 in the vacuum after Portugal withdrew from its former colony, and declared the territory its 27th province a year later in a move never recognised by the United Nations.

Indian police step up security at Sikhdom's holiest shrine

AMRITSAR, India (AFP) — Indian police were deployed Sunday in and around Sikhdom's holiest shrine before a controversial move to appoint a new spiritual chief, officials said.

Nearly 250 plainclothes policemen took up positions inside the sprawling Golden Temple complex while many others were positioned outside the shrine in this northern Indian city, the officials said.

The security measures were taken to prevent possible violence during Monday's scheduled ceremony to appoint Pura Singh as the spiritual chief of the Sikhs in place of the sacked Ranjit Singh.

The decision has pitted Prakash Singh Badal, the

moderate chief minister of the Sikh-majority northern state of Punjab, against hardliner Gurcharan Singh Tohra and other supporters of Ranjit Singh.

Supporters of Badal, whose party is a member of India's ruling coalition, sacked Ranjit Singh — the former Sikh spiritual and religious head based at the Golden Temple — on Feb. 10.

Badal's aides announced Pura Singh would take his place Monday despite opposition from Tohra, who heads an influential Sikh religious parliament.

Police said thousands of Sikhs were expected to witness the appointment of Pura Singh as the new "head minis-

ter" of Sikhdom.

But Ranjit Singh continues to occupy the office of the Sikh religious head in the Golden Temple. His supporters have said they will boycott Monday's ceremony but police said some may try to disrupt the proceedings.

The blazing row between chief minister Badal and friend-turned-foe Tohra, the two best known Sikh leaders, has sparked fears of a revival of Sikh militancy in the state.

Some 25,000 people were killed in a bloody 10-year-long Sikh separatist drive for an independent theocratic homeland called Khalistan (land of the pure) that was crushed by security forces in 1993.

In June 1984 troops stormed the Golden Temple to flush out heavily-armed Sikh militants. The operation left some 600 people, mostly innocent pilgrims, dead.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who ordered the attack, was shot dead in October that year by two of her Sikh guards to avenge the sacrilege, leading to an anti-Sikh pogrom in India.

Tohra has long been known as a sympathiser with Sikh militants while Badal opposes militancy.

The Golden Temple — so called because its domes are gold-plated — is visited by thousands of Sikhs every day. Many Hindus also worship at the shrine.

ECOMOG denies summary executions in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN (AFP) — The west African force deployed in Sierra Leone has denied carrying out summary executions during its fight against rebels, as alleged in a United Nations report.

The ECOMOG force "is not engaged in summary executions of suspected rebels or rebel collaborators," spokesman Lieutenant Chris Olukolade said in a radio broadcast late Saturday.

"We are not aware of this," Olukolade said of the allegations of summary executions contained in a report by U.N. human rights monitors who visited Freetown last month after Revolutionary United Front rebels stormed the Sierra Leonean capital.

"ECOMOG soldiers are trained

and are aware of the conventions that operate in war and none of us have been mandated to execute anyone."

"We have exercised restraint in carrying out our operations even to some extent that they amounted to serious risks on the lives of ECOMOG soldiers," he said.

ECOMOG, which has since retaken much of Freetown, works under the authority of the Economic Community of West African States and is commanded, funded and manned mostly by Nigeria. Its presence in Sierra Leone enjoys the support of the U.N. Security Council.

"We have also dissuaded the public who feel cheated, harassed and had borne the brunt of rebel atrocities (and) are so enraged that they

wanted to engage in mob action against any suspected rebel. Having gone that far, we would not again turn around and start executing people," continued Olukolade.

The U.N. report cited reliable witnesses seeing ECOMOG soldiers "summarily executing detainees who were allegedly either rebels or rebel sympathisers."

It said up to 5,000 people had been killed and many brutally mutilated since the rebel invasion.

Foreign correspondents have reported similar incidents.

Olukolade went on to criticise a statement made by the head of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Abidjan which said the port of Freetown was insecure.

"This is a complete falsehood and

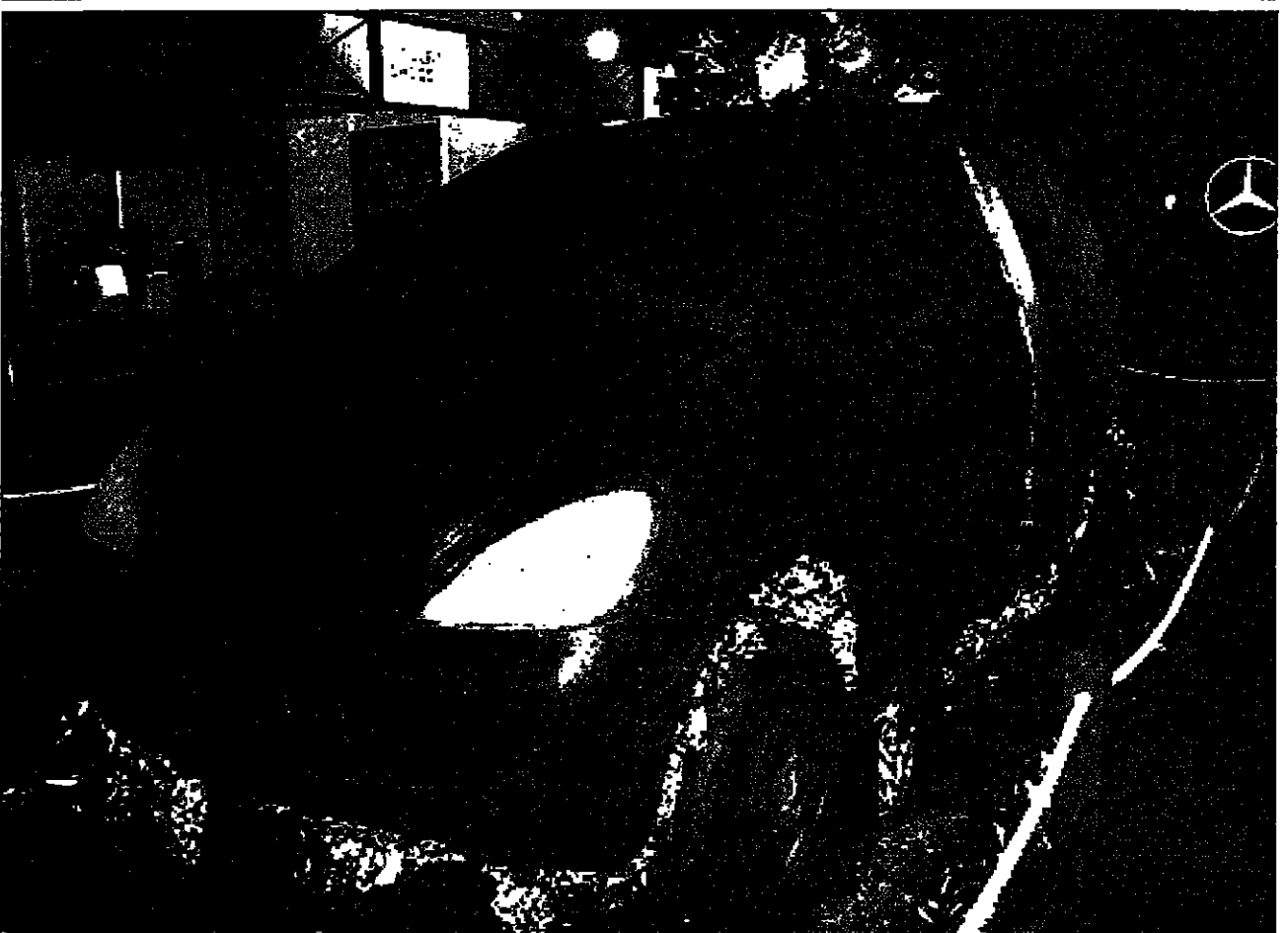
there is no truth in it whatsoever.

"The port is functioning, vessels are coming in. The ECOMOG Navy is patrolling the territorial waters of Sierra Leone to ensure safety. In any case there is no threat on the seafloor," he said.

"If the WFP has any support items for the people of Sierra Leone, it should feel to bring it in. There is no hindrance whatsoever as claimed," the official said.

Olukolade said "barron and search operations" would continue as an "indefinite exercise."

"Huge quantities of arms and ammunitions of various types have been discovered in addition to hundreds of suspected rebels and their alleged collaborators who are now in the security net," he disclosed.



A car looking nice enough to eat is on display at the chocolate exhibition which opened its doors for public at the Sablon in Brussels Feb. 12. The chocolate version of a Mercedes A class was created by Brussels' Chocolatier De Bailleul (AFP photo)

THE ARAB Students Union of the University of Jordan, in the name of the Arab People, and in the name of the Arab Ummah, His Majesty King Hussein, the King of Jordan, and the Arab Country, have always looked upon His Majesty as a source of inspiration and the people of Jordan together.

Long live King Abdullah — may it be him and the great Arab people.

Saif Al Yazen, Executive

ON BEHALF of my friends, Maud Barber, and myself, I would like to send condolences to the people of Jordan and the family of His Majesty, the late King Hussein, may all find peace at this time.

Letters of condolence

IT IS with great respect that we send our deepest condolences over the death of King Hussein. His Majesty will be greatly missed, but his generosity and kindness to his subjects will never be forgotten.

Khaled Zahran and family
U.S.

THE ARAB and Muslim Community in Hawaii would like to convey our deepest condolences to the Hashemite Family and to the people of Jordan on the loss of a Great Leader His Majesty King Hussein Ben Talal. May God Bless His Soul.

We also wish His Majesty King Abdullah II a long life full of accomplishments for the well-being of his people.

Dr. Yusuf N. Tamimi
Professor Emeritus
University of Hawaii
Hawaii

WE WOULD like to extend our condolences to the Royal Family and the people of Jordan, on the loss of His Majesty King Hussein. May you rest in peace Your Majesty, and God bless you.

Haroun & Abdismam Hilalat
Spring Valley, NY
U.S.

WITH GREAT sorrow and sadness I extend my deepest and sincere condolences to His Majesty King Abdullah and the Royal Family on the loss of His Majesty King Hussein. May he rest in peace. He was a truly great, courageous and compassionate man. My best wishes to His Majesty King Abdullah in his new endeavour.

Suhil Kandah
California
U.S.

I SEND my deepest sympathy to you and your kinsmen for the loss of your beloved leader and King. May his successor live up to and exceed his grandeur and may God give you all patience to live through a trying transition.

Ghida AlJuburi
Germany

I WOULD like to send my condolences to the Royal Family and also to the people of Jordan. I was so saddened to hear about the death of His Majesty. He was a great man and people from all walks of life loved him.

Sharon Alzaben
Memphis, Tennessee
U.S.

IT IS with great sorrow and regret that we mourn the passing of His Majesty King Hussein. The grief we have felt during the past few days is overwhelming.

His Majesty was an inspiration to all of us and has left us a legacy that we will live our lives trying to live up to that legacy...

We extend our deepest sympathies to the Royal Hashemite Family and to the large and united Jordanian family.

We belong to God and to Him we shall return.

Dr. Manar Al Farra and family
Amman

AS A Jordanian born abroad, my family and I want to send the most deepest condolences to His Majesty King Abdullah Ben Hussein for the loss of his father His Majesty King Hussein. And for Her Majesty Queen Noor and all the Royal family, we are very sad, as are all of our Jordanian family.

God bless the King Abdullah and Jordan.

Nedal Abu Fannas and family
Puerto Rico

WE ARE writing to you to explain the deep sorrow we feel for the passing away of a father, a great leader, and most importantly the person we looked up to for guidance. It never occurred to us that such a person could pass away. We always took for granted the fact of King Hussein's presence. Now especially after we saw the most touching funeral service, all we can say is that we will always be King Hussein's men and his memory is engraved on our souls until the end of time. Also King Abdullah is an assurance that the legacy will never fade away.

Rest in peace Your Majesty.

Qussay Asad, Zaid Mufleh
Mohammed Batayneh, Ammar Sweis
Washington, DC
U.S.

THE ARAB Students Union of the United States send our deepest condolences on the passing of the great helmsman of the Arab Ummah. His Majesty King Hussein (R'adallah). Our organisation, which comprises members from 14 Arab countries, have always looked towards His Majesty as a source of inspiration and a bond that holds the people of Jordan together.

Long live King Abdullah — may the Almighty guide him and the great Arab people.

Saif Al Yazan, Executive Director - A.S.U.
U.S.

ON BEHALF of my friends, Maud O'Keeffe and Ben Barber, and myself, I would like to send our sincere condolences to the people of Jordan and, in particular, to the family of His Majesty, the late King Hussein. We hope that you may all find peace at this time of sadness.

Jackie Shanahan
England

I WOULD like to extend my condolences to HM King Abdullah, HM Queen Noor, Crown Prince Hamzah, the entire Royal Hashemite Family, and all Jordanians. As I am only 15, I have not known much of King Hussein, but from what I do know and have learnt, he was a great and kind man of peace.

According to my grandfather, who like many, chatted with him on the radio, he was very friendly, as they conversed occasionally. I am deeply saddened by his death as many others around the world are. He and the people of Jordan are in my prayers.

Brandon Andrew
Southold, NY
U.S.

I WANT to express my condolences to King Hussein's family and all people of Jordan.

On former U.S. President Richard Nixon's grave stone is written "The highest tide that can be bestowed on a person is peacemaker."

King Hussein was very much a peacemaker, and he will always be held in high honour in my heart. My his son continue his father's legacy.

I hope all of our countries may find peace and harmony in the future. Nothing would please King Hussein more and nothing could give this American greater pleasure.

Cliff Cernek
Cresskill, NJ
U.S.

PLEASE ACCEPT my heartfelt condolences for the loss of your beloved King Hussein. His wisdom is his legacy to the world.

Anne Copeland
Tampa, Florida
U.S.

WITH GREAT sorrow and sadness, grief and disbelief, I send my deepest condolences to the Royal family and to all Jordanians for the great loss of the great leader, our King, King Hussein. May he be in peace.

Lorette Zaidan
California
U.S.

MY FAMILY and I would like to convey our deepest condolences to the entire Royal Family and our beloved Jordanian people for the loss of our great leader, King Hussein Ben Talal.

In my old days, I had the honour of being one of His Majesty's Royal security officers. My memories of him are memories of pride and dignity, the memories of a courageous leader and passionate advocate of simplicity and human principles.

"Abu Abdullah" will never die, he is in our hearts and our souls. His wide open, honest smile of love, care and peace will stay before our eyes and imaginations forever.

May God bless "Abu Abdullah" and guide his son, King Abdullah and give him the strength and the energy to serve the interests of our great Jordanian people.

Kamal A. Shurdom & Family
Houston, Texas
U.S.

ON BEHALF of the Washah family in the United States, we would like to express our heartfelt condolences over the loss of the greatest man this century. We wish his son, His Majesty King Abdullah, continued good health and happiness, and the Jordanian people further progress and prosperity under King Abdullah's leadership.

Faraj Washah and sons
U.S.

TO ALL members of the Royal family, to all members of my Jordanian family and to everyone across the globe who mourns the loss of His Majesty King Hussein, I offer my deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies. No amount of words, no matter how eloquent, can begin to describe His Majesty's greatness. You, my King, were heaven sent not only to Jordan and Jordanians but to the entire world. You have been and will continue to be, despite your passing, Jordan's most prized asset. You are immortal through your past deeds and will continue to live life through your own children and your Jordanian children. As a Jordanian American I pray to God to preserve, guide and enrich with wisdom our new King, King Abdullah. May the Lord protect your every step.

Omar Jamal Fakhoury
U.S.

I WOULD like to send my heartfelt condolences to the Royal family and the people of Jordan on the loss of His Majesty King Hussein. May he rest in peace. He was a truly great, compassionate and courageous man. The world will be a much poorer place without him. I share in your sadness and grief. May Allah bless you.

Pamela H du Boulay
Beguildy, Knighton, Powys
U.K.

MY HEART and prayers go out to Queen Noor and the family of the late King Hussein. The world has suffered a great loss.

I know that King Abdullah will be a living tribute and testament to the great ruler his father was. His success is assured.

Melissa Goodwin
Mt. Dora, Florida
U.S.

IN MY name and on behalf of Jordanian doctors in Romania, I would like to express our heartfelt condolences and our deepest sympathy on the passing of our beloved King, great father, world leader, His Majesty King Hussein Ben Talal to the Royal Hashemite Family. His Majesty will always remain in our hearts.

We wish King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein good health and happiness and our Jordanian people prosperity, democracy and progress under his leadership.

Dr. Mahmoud Suleiman Zureigat
Zureigat Medical Co. Ltd.
16, Eremia Grigorescu Street
Craiova 1100
Romania

Hungarian delegation

AS THE list of participating leaders, from Reuters, published in the Jordan Times recently, does not include the Hungarian delegation, we do hope, that Hungary's attendance could be recognised in the coming issue of the Jordan Times in a brief notice.

The delegation of the Republic of Hungary:

1. HE Peter Harrach, Minister of Social Affairs;
2. HE Ambassador Mihály Bayer, Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs;
3. HE Zoltán Pereszlényi, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary;
4. HE Attila Szántó, Charge'd Affaires, Embassy of the Republic of Hungary, Amman.

Embassy of the Republic of Hungary
Amman

ON BEHALF of the members of the Fondazione Laboratorio Mediterraneo and of the Academy of the Mediterranean I wish to express my condolence and deepest sense of regret at the sad demise of the beloved King Hussein.

The Academy of the Mediterranean, in awarding him with the Mediterranean Prize for Culture and Peace — the nomination of which took place in Naples on January 5, 1999 with a solemn ceremony and a concert dedicated to King Hussein — intended to recognise his essential role as an "architect of peace" in the world.

Allow me, for the moment, to express the deepest feelings of esteem.

Michele Capasso
President
Fondazione Laboratorio Mediterraneo

WITH GREAT sorrow and anguish I learnt of the passing of His Majesty King Hussein. May God rest his soul.

God bless Jordan, and the new King.

Dr. Yazan Rawashdeh
Denmark

WE OFFER our most sincere condolences to Jordan and the people of Jordan on their tragic loss, especially to His Majesty King Abdullah, may God grant him his father's strength and wisdom.

Mina Khoury
U.S.

IN THIS moment of ultimate sadness, please accept our deepest regrets and most sincere condolences, for the loss of His Majesty King Hussein.

Patrick A. Grimaud
General Manager
ENVECOS
Denmark

ON BEHALF of Sukleen and all the Sukkar Engineering Group Companies, I extend my sincere and heartfelt condolences on the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein. Our hearts and our thoughts are with the people of the Kingdom of Jordan whose grief we share and great loss we mourn. May he rest in peace.

Hassan Hammoud
SEG
Lebanon

ON BEHALF of citizens of the City of Nalchik let me express sincere condolences to His Majesty King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein, the Royal family and the Jordanian nation on the death of a great leader, politician and man of the twentieth century, His Majesty King Hussein Ben Talal, who did his utmost to serve peace in the region for the progress and prosperity of the Jordanian people.

I hope and wish His Majesty King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein to follow the steps of his great father in maintaining peace in the world and further prosperity of the Kingdom.

M. Shogenov
Mayor of the city of Nalchik

NEVER BEFORE have I felt so close to a leader I hardly knew. Last year, I visited Jordan for the first time when my school took part in a sports tournament in Amman. I was immediately struck by the Jordanian people's love and pride for their leader, the late King Hussein. Before this, I was never interested in politics and in political figures, as I had given up all hope for peace in this area and in the world. I decided upon my return to Kuwait to learn more about this King who had earned such love and respect from his people and the world.

The more I learned about the late King, the more I was inspired not only by his ability to balance his relations between the Western leaders and the Middle East, but also by his warm yet firm personality.

He was indeed an advocate of peace. What moved me the most, however, was how open-minded and fatherly he was. I drew much inspiration from him, and I would like to offer my sincerest condolences to the Jordanian Royal family and all the people of Jordan. He was a figure that everyone could relate to, and his passing away has left a gap in the lives of the Jordanians, the Arab nations, and the world. Your Majesty King Abdullah, your father was a man to be proud of, and whatever happens is God's will. I wish you and the rest of the Royal family the best of luck in the future, and again, I offer my deepest sympathy and support.

Alia Tayea
The American International School of Kuwait
Kuwait

PLEASE ACCEPT our deepest condolences on your country's terrible loss. Not only the Kingdom of Jordan, but the entire world has lost a leader and a friend.

Jerrel Branson
President and CEO
Ecogas
U.S.

Arab states bag 50% of Iraq's trade

Business

Day

A review

Hamman
importance

THE MOST important market is the money market and price of interest rate. It is like the same for many products. And Muhammad Hamman, professor of economics at the University of Jordan, explained the local demand for low interest rate. He said it is practical because nominal interest is constant. But the real interest rate and service is low. This is due to the economic situation, he said.

The economies plan is that a part of the fund was tunnelled to Jordan and he is going to take part of it that would be a great flight. He noted that Jordan's industries are weak. Local banks they were established. He concluded that the issue of activating the economy requires a real improvement climate that would develop the climate and confidence of investors' trust to open the economy.

Salem Khurián, deputy to the board of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, saw the implications as the movement to consolidate

ARIES: (March 21 to April 20) Caught in the web of things this week. If you want a logical and realistic picture as much fun as a jumping leap of faith, you should be able to find it on the other side.

TAUROS: (April 20 to May 20) Excellent for today is a lucky note. A person who knows everything tells you what to do, and how to do it, especially. This person has all the actual knowledge, but is actually about, too.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 20) Could clinch a deal today opening all kinds of new communication is your success and right now you have to communicate on a level. This might help you your career, or find a career. You've got the idea, now get going.

CANCER: (June 21 to July 20) There's no scarcity of things you know. A lot of people and they're looking for it and they have to do with one of them, but it's sending requests to several places before that happens to do the work, and could be yours.

LEO: (July 21 to August 20) May feel kind of tired to get plan of action is to be a commitment over in some

JORDANIAN-AMERICAN
FOR EDUCATIONAL

His Majesty
We
His Majesty
Her Majesty

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Hamareh: High costs are most important barriers to investments

** "THE MOST important investment barrier is the high costs of investment and production due to high interest rate and indirect taxes like the sales tax which cover many products and services," said Munir Hamareh, professor of economics at the University of Jordan.

Furthermore, he indicated that the local demand is weak as a result of low individual income. Hamareh explained that the real income is practically shrinking because nominal pay in reality almost constant whereas prices of goods and services are rising steadily. "This is due to the deteriorating economic situation in general," he said.

The economics professor pointed out that a part of the Jordanian capital was funnelled outside the Kingdom and he asked the government to take practical measures that would help in curbing capital flight. He noted that some Jordanian industries have only faced weak local competition since they were established.

Hamareh concluded by stressing that the issue of encouraging and activating investment requires a real and practical investment climate and measures that would develop the reality of this climate and consolidate the investors' trust to operate in it.

Salim Khirfan, the second deputy to the board chairman of the Amman Chamber of Commerce, saw the stability of legislations as the most important element to consolidate the invest-

ment sector in Jordan. He also mentioned the need to provide the necessary services to the investor and the availability of a complete infrastructure.

Khifan said the government and the concerned parties should formulate a stable mechanism for transferring funds to the investor in order to facilitate his/her commercial and economic operations. He also mentioned the political stability which Jordan has enjoyed for a long time.

The trade official stressed that minimising routine, removing complexities and showing flexibility will also consolidate the investment climate. However, in addition to all of this, it is necessary that a cadre of qualified personnel is entrusted to carry out the investment law, Khirfan said.

He added that the concerned parties should once in a while study some tax and customs exemption for some economic projects because that will encourage the investor to invest in Jordan without restrictions. In conclusion, he highlighted the importance of free movement and speedy execution of transactions at the free zones to be able to meet the requirements of the present stage (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Share prices continue to rise at AFM despite profit-taking

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Profit-taking dominated trading at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) on Tuesday and pushed the 60-share general price index to 182.03 points, a 0.91 point rise above Saturday's 181.12 points, brokers said Sunday.

The trading volume recorded a slight increase, up to JD2.7 million from JD2.6 million, the AFM daily bulletin showed.

Shares of 62 firms changed hands on the

floor on Sunday with shares of 23 companies recording increase in their prices, 20 registering decline while stocks of 19 firms recorded no change in their prices.

"The market was dominated by profit taking following heavy buying by some investors in the past two weeks," Naim Nageeb, a broker, said.

"They bought shares at a low prices and decided to sell some of their holdings now to make some profit," Nageeb told the Jordan Times.

Trading in the industrial sector amounted to JD1.5 million followed by banking sector with JD606,201 and services sector with JD306,190, the one-page AFM bulletin indicated.

For the second consecutive day, trading focused on shares of mining and pharmaceutical firms, the broker said.

The Arab Potash Company ranked first with a volume of JD556,860 and its share price increased by 150 fils to reach JD4.190.

Among the shares that drew the attention of investors in the industrial sector were those of the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company, which won JD494,717, and the Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Company which recorded JD223,000 during yesterday's trading.

Shares of the Housing Bank, which won JD411,281, ranked first among commercial banks, with its price closing at JD2.940 up from JD2.900 on Saturday.

For the second consecutive day, Jordan Electric

Power Company ranked first in the service sector amid heavy buying from a local "private firm" with a trading volume of JD298,669.

Industrial sector price index rose 0.80 point while banking and services sector rose 0.88 and 0.37 points respectively, the bulletin showed.

Trading in the parallel market amounted to JD293,882 with the Union Arab Investors ranking first with a volume of JD93,000, the bulletin indicated.

(D.I.G)

The Italian Ladies in Jordan

mourn with deepest sadness and grief, the loss of

His Majesty

King Hussein Ben Talal

The Great King of Wisdom and Peace

and would like to extend to

His Majesty

King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein,

The Hashemite family and

the Jordanian people

Their Deepest Condolences and

Sympathy

May God Rest His Soul in Peace



Royal Dutch Airlines

mourn with deep grief the late

King Hussein Ben Talal

(May God bless his soul)

and wish to offer

His Majesty King Abdullah

and the Royal Hashemite Family

heartfelt condolences and

sympathy imploring God Almighty to bless the late King's soul.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Don't be caught in the trap of rational thinking this week. If you stick with what's logical and realistic, it won't be nearly as much fun as if you take a bounding leap of faith. And this week, you should be able to do that, and land on the other side unscathed.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Your assignment for today is to lay low and take notes. A person who thinks he or she knows everything wants to tell you what to do, and you'd be a fool to argue, especially right now. This person has all the aces, and may actually know what he or she is talking about, too.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You could clinch a deal today that would open up all kinds of new horizons. Communication is your speciality, of course, and right now you could learn how to communicate on a whole new level. This might help you advance in your career, or find a career you love. You've got the idea, now get the education.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 22) There's no scarcity of money out there, you know. A lot of people have it, and they're looking for ways to invest it. All you have to do is link up with one of them, but it might take sending requests to several different places before that happens. Be willing to do the work, and the profits could be yours.

LEO: (July 23 to August 22) You may feel kind of tired today. Your best plan of action is to hand the assignment over to somebody else.

You should have a partner who's able to do it better than you could anyway. If you're up against a challenge, or even more than a challenge, why not ask somebody else to just handle that part for you?

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) You may feel that there's almost more work than you can handle today. You like to perform at a high level. You want everything to be just right. Today, that could be difficult, but it's not impossible. Get feedback from the people you're trying to serve, so you can put the right habits into place.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The intensity of a conversation with a loved one today could startle you. This person wants to be certain about everything. You like your freedom, but today you're being pushed to put more structure into your life, especially in regard to your relationship. Just make the commitment. Who knows? It could make your life easier.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Looks like you'd rather stay home today than do just about anything else, and if you can manage to pull that off, you should. Romance is part of the reason, but you're also putting down roots. If you're not able to spend the whole day at home, then spend as much time as you can there.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) What you're learning now could propel you into all sorts of new adventures, and you're definite-

ly in the mood to study. That's perfect. Soak it up. The more you acquire in the way of skills, the more valuable you become, to yourself and to other people as well.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 19) Don't hide your money under the mattress. You'll actually wind up with less if you do that. Not only will the mice eat it, but you'll also lose whatever interest you would have gained by putting it in a bank account. Looks like a person who's slightly older and wiser than you has good advice, so take advantage of it.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) The new moon in your sign gives you awesome powers. Focus those on helping others. Someone you know well could use your counselling now, so look around. Don't waste time being introspective. Share skills that come easily one who finds them difficult. You're wealthier than you realise, so be generous with your time and talents.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) You may have a sense of foreboding today, as if you have to do something and you don't want to. There's no easy way to get out from that bureaucratic tangle, is there? Well, you may have a hard time with words, but your smile can move mountains. Today, use it where it'll do the most good.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

JORDAN TIMES

TEL.: 5699634

5684311

His spirit will remain a guiding light



The British Airways family extends its deepest condolences to

His Majesty

King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein,

The Royal Family and the grieving nation on the passing of our guiding light

His Majesty

King Hussein Bin Talal

We will miss his dedication to the nation, and will use his teachings in every day of our lives
May God Rest His Soul

BRITISH AIRWAYS

JORDANIAN-AMERICAN COMMISSION
FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGE

FULBRIGHT

الجنة الأمريكية - الأردنية
للتبادل التعليمي

Mourns the passing of

His Majesty King Hussein Bin Talal

We extend our heartfelt condolences to

His Majesty King Abdullah Bin Al Hussein,
Her Majesty Queen Noor, the Royal Hashemite Family
and to the People of Jordan.

May his soul rest in peace

De la Hoya rallies to win a split decision

LAS VEGAS, Nevada (AFP) — Oscar de la Hoya rallied in the final three rounds to win a split decision over Ghana's Ike Quartey here Saturday, keeping his World Boxing Council welterweight crown in a battle of unbeatens.

A 12th-round knockdown and minute-long flurry in the last round by de la Hoya sealed the victory for the American, who rose to 30-0 as Quartey suffered his first loss against 34 victories and a draw.

"It was a very intimidating fight for me," de la Hoya said. "I knew it was going to be hard. I was a little worried about his punching power. I underestimated his ability to box. This guy is a powerful hitter."

Two judges went for de la Hoya, by margins of 116-112 and 116-113, while the third went for Quartey 115-114.

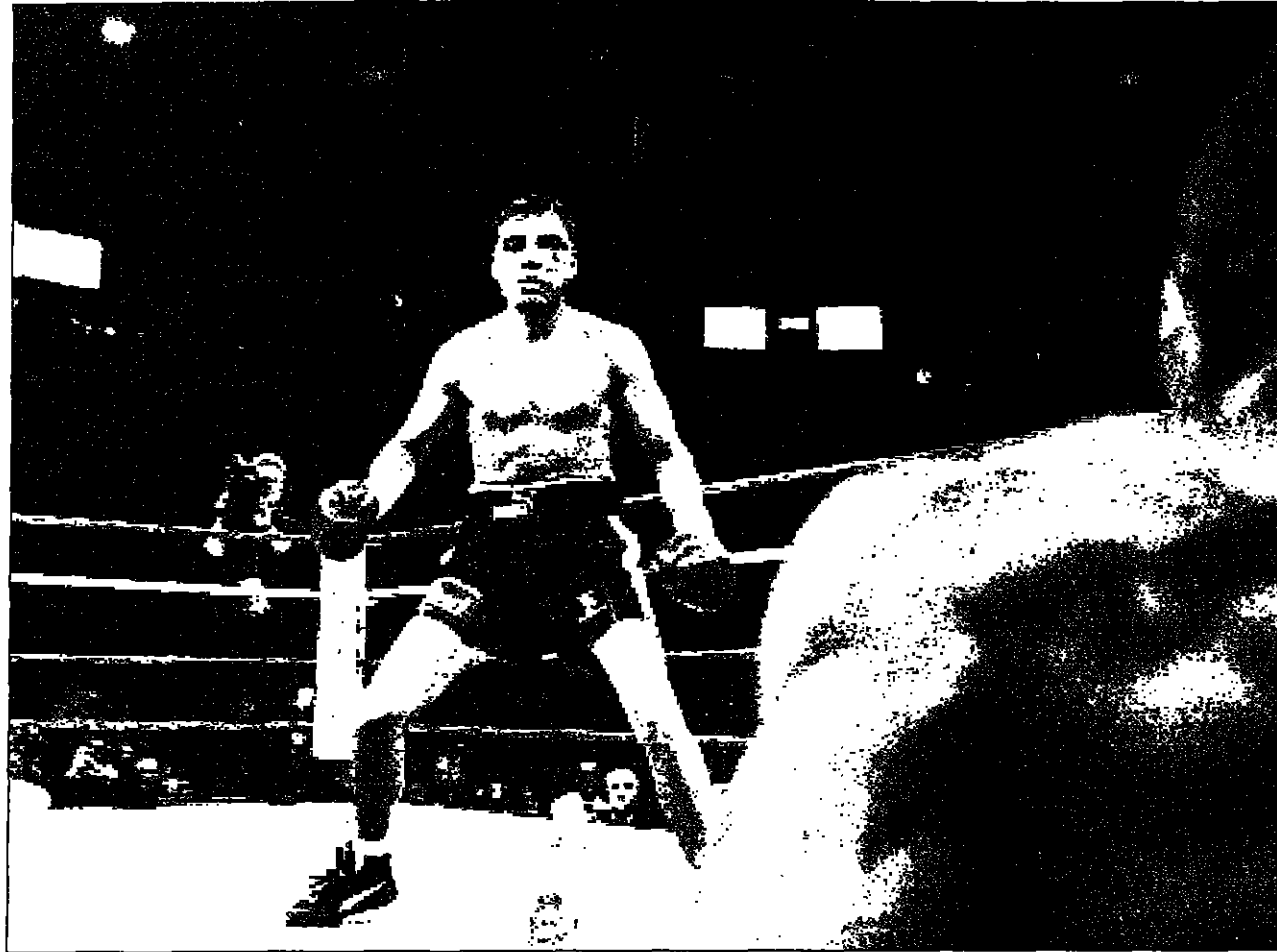
All three judges had de la Hoya winning the last round 10-8 and the final three rounds of the showdown, which ended with both Quartey and "Golden Boy" de la Hoya raising their arms in victory.

"Everyone saw the fight in the world. It was a bad decision," Quartey said. "All he could do was survive."

De la Hoya knocked Quartey down with a solid left hook 10 seconds into the final round. Quartey rose and went against the ropes, where de la Hoya pounded the wobbling African for a minute but could not stop him.

"I dropped him. I almost knocked him out," de la Hoya said. "I had him. The guy can take a punch."

An exhausted Quartey and punched-out de la Hoya finished out the



Challenger Ike Quartey (R) is knocked down in round twelve by U.S. boxer and WBC Welterweight Champion Oscar de la Hoya in Las Vegas, NV, on Saturday. De la Hoya won a split decision victory over his challenger, keeping his World Boxing Council welterweight crown. A sixth-round and 12th-round knockdown and a minute-long flurry in the last round by de la Hoya sealed the victory for the American. Quartey suffered the first loss against 34 victories and one draw (AFP photo)

final 90 seconds unable to do more than glare at each other as time ran out, giving de la Hoya his fifth victory over a previously undefeated foe.

"I was in total control, which was the important part," de la Hoya said. "I beat him at his own game plan. That was not the strategy. But I was content."

De la Hoya tried to quell talk of a rematch minutes after the bout.

"I don't think so," he said. "There are bigger, better fights out there I think people want to watch. There are more exciting opponents for me."

It's no wonder de la

Hoya did not want a rematch. The "Golden Boy" silenced critics who said he picked out-matched or past-their-prime foes by withstanding the toughest challenge of his career in Quartey.

De la Hoya is expected to next fight Oba Carr, who won an undercard fight, here in May.

De la Hoya suffered a cut eyelid last November that postponed this fight, one Quartey said was not so severe.

Quartey had not fought in 16 months due to foes who stepped aside over a contract dispute, a drug suspension and injury.

Quartey was stripped of his World Boxing Association crown because he chose a 482-day layoff rather than risk missing a \$4.5 million payday for fighting de la Hoya. Quartey has never before made even one million dollars off a single bout.

Quartey's powerful right hand began scoring in the seventh, eighth and ninth rounds, keeping de la Hoya at bay and scoring more often with the hard punch as the rounds continued.

"I knew I had to come and fight," Quartey said. "I wanted to box him. I wanted to surprise him."

He is a champion. I respect a champion. I knew what I had to do."

De la Hoya's left eye started swelling in the sixth round, when both fighters were knocked down.

De la Hoya sent Quartey to the canvas 10 seconds into the sixth round with a left set up by a right hand. But Quartey answered with a left that sent de la Hoya on the seat of his pants later in the round.

In the first five rounds, both men adopted a conservative style, each choosing their punches carefully and seeking weaknesses in each other's defence while finding little to attack.

Thys wins Tokyo marathon in world second best time

TOKYO (AFP) — South Africa's Sydney Olympic hopeful Gert Thys beat his own personal best by more than one minute for an easy victory in the Tokyo international men's marathon on Sunday.

The 27-year-old Thys, who spurred around the 30-kilometre mark in a second group and then overtook front-runner Kenichi Takahashi of Japan, made a long solo run afterwards to clock two hours six minutes and 33 seconds.

It was the second fastest time in the world, following Ronaldo da Costa of Brazil who timed the fastest time of 2:06:05 in Berlin in September last season.

Thys, already named to represent South Africa for the world championships in August, was only 11 seconds behind Costa's split time when he passed the 40km mark.

"I'm very happy to run in a fast time today. That's my best time. I was very worried when he (Takahashi) was more than two minutes in front of us," said the 27-year-old runner from Prieska.

"Around the 25-km point, I told one of my team mates who was leading in front of us 'That guy is running away, we have to close the gap.'"

"When I closed the gap, I



South Africa's Gert Thys crossed the finish line to win the tenth running of the Tokyo International Marathon on Sunday. Thys covered the distance of 42.195 kilometres in 2 hours, 6 minutes, 33 seconds (AP photo)

didn't want to push too fast, because I know there's a hill ahead of us, so I tried to maintain the same pace." Otherwise, the hill will be a lot of problem for me," added Thys.

Takahashi set the pace from early on breaking away from a front group after the 7-km mark, but he

then developed problems in his right foot shortly after Thys and other runners passed him and abandoned around the 33-km mark.

Miki Hiroshi finished second in 2:08:05, followed by fellow Japanese Koji Shimizu in 2:09:00, and Luiz Dos Santos of Brazil fourth in 2:11:13.

Plenty of contenders in Daytona 500 shoot-out

DAYTONA BEACH (AP) — At least a dozen drivers have staked their claim to winning the Daytona 500 on Sunday. The winner could be Rusty Wallace, who'll start 10th in the 43-car field Sunday in NASCAR's richest and most prestigious event.

He's confident he can get his first victory in 17 tries in the season-opening Winston Cup race at Daytona International Speedway. "This race would mean everything to me because I think that any good racer that hasn't won the Daytona 500 would feel like there's a void in his career," Wallace said. "I know I surely would." Dale Earnhardt went through the same frustration for 20 years before he finally won the big one last February. The relief was overwhelming.

"Sure, I had some tears in my eyes," said the man who has built his racing career on tough, aggressive driving. "I wanted to win this race for an awful long time, and it's such a tough race to win." Since a lot of other

drivers in the lineup feel the same way, the 185,000 spectators who turn out for the \$5-million race can expect a shoot-out. "It's going to be wild," said Kyle Petty, who's looking for his first win in his 18th start. His father, Richard, won the Daytona 500 seven times. Asked what he thinks it will take to win Sunday, the younger Petty said: "Patience. But nobody's got any."

Daytona is one of two tracks where NASCAR requires carburetor restrictor plates to slow the cars for the safety of drivers and fans. But the plates also sap horsepower and keep the field unnaturally even, bunching up the cars and making wrecks a virtual certainty.

"You've got no horsepower to speak of, compared to what we used to have," Wallace said. "Our engines right now in Winston Cup racing are approaching 800 horsepower and, right now, at Daytona we're sitting here with 400 or 450 horsepower."

"So, it's all how air works and

momentum works. If you don't have the right amount of momentum when you make a commitment to pass a car, you probably won't get past him."

That's why patience is such a virtue. If a driver steps out of one of the long freight train of cars at Daytona without another car to help, he's just as likely to wind up losing 15 or 30 positions as moving forward.

Earnhardt, who will start Sunday's race from fourth — the same place he started last year — showed he's one of the favorites by dominating his 125-mile (200-kilometre) qualifying race Thursday, just as he did in 1998.

Other favourites will go after it, too. They include: Jeff Gordon, who begins the hunt for his third straight series title; Bobby Labonte, who finished the first intermediate clocking but was fast and flawless through the bottom half and was timed in 47.53.

"I was pretty amazed when I crossed the finish line," Stegall said. "I had heard a huge cheer for Perilla when I was standing in the start and I said, 'Well, OK, she's done it again, a good second run.' So I said, 'Well, I better do it too.'"

"I knew that I didn't have a chance in the top part because it's really not my cup of tea. I was just waiting to get over that last pitch because that was where I was

Barkley to have surgery, miss 3-4 weeks

HOUSTON, Texas (AFP) — Forward Charles Barkley will have surgery Sunday to repair torn cartilage in his left knee and will miss three to four weeks, leaving the Rockets without their leading scorer and rebounder, the team said.

That answers the question many had when the Houston Rockets put together a frontcourt of aging superstars Hakeem Olajuwon, Scottie Pippen and Barkley.

They asked whether the trio — all are among the NBA's 50 Greatest Players and make up one of the best frontcourts in history — could remain healthy for the entire season. The answer is no.

On Tuesday, Barkley underwent a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) that revealed a torn medial meniscus in the joint. He said then he would not have surgery and would rehabili-

itate the injury through treatment and exercise.

Barkley turns 36 in one week, and is in his 15th NBA season and his third with the Rockets.

He had 16 points and 16 rebounds in Wednesday's 92-82 home win over Sacramento and 15 and 16 in Thursday's 105-95 win at Dallas.

The Rockets have won four in a row since a season-opening loss to the Los Angeles Lakers.

Still looking for an elusive championship ring, Barkley entered this shortened season with career averages of 22.5 points and 11.7 rebounds in 1,011 games.

He missed 14 games last season with a variety of ailments, including a hernia and a torn triceps muscle.

He would not have surgery and would rehabili-

Sports

Samprase wins Sydney Open

SAN JOSE, California (AP) — Pete Sampras won the Sydney Open tennis tournament here Sunday, defeating Andre Agassi in a match between two of the world's top players. Sampras, 27, won the match 6-4, 6-3, 6-4. Agassi, 28, was the defending champion. Sampras won the title for the second time in his career, having also won the 1994 Wimbledon title. Agassi won the 1995 Wimbledon title. The match was the first of three in the Sydney Open tournament. The other two matches were between Andre Agassi and Andre Agassi, and Andre Agassi and Andre Agassi.

Aussie

WILL, Australia (AP) — In a dramatic free-for-all, a group of men from Down Under went over the top.

Aussie Zali Stegall won the world championship in the women's 48kg class here Sunday in the World Judo Championships. Stegall, 27, won the title by defeating her opponent in the final round. Stegall won the title for the second time in her career, having also won the 1995 World Judo Championships. Stegall won the title for the second time in her career, having also won the 1995 World Judo Championships. Stegall won the title for the second time in her career, having also won the 1995 World Judo Championships.

It was Australia's first gold medal in the world championship in the women's 48kg class. Stegall won the title for the second time in her career, having also won the 1995 World Judo Championships. Stegall won the title for the second time in her career, having also won the 1995 World Judo Championships.

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Al-Futtaim SONS

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Bruce Willis .. in		Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi .. in		Comedian Adel Emmam .. in		Adel Imam, Wafa' Amer & Kamal Shinawi .. in		ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria		ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria			
MERCURY RISING		ALWAD MAHROUS TBA' AL WAZIR		AL ZA'EEM		ALWAD MAHROUS TBA' AL WAZIR		THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY		LETHAL WEAPON 4			
Shows: 10:30, 8:30, 6:15, 3:30, 12:30		Shows: 10:30, 8:30, 6:15, 3:30, 12:30		Shows: 12:15, 3:15, 6:30, 9:45		Shows: 12:30, 2:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		Shows: 3:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30			
						CONCORDE '2' SleepWalkers				MULAN			
						Shows: 3:30, 5:30 only				Shows: 3:30, 5:00			

Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

Sampras withdraws, leaving Sybase with lacklustre final

SAN JOSE, California (AP) — Fans who bought tickets to the Valentine's Day final of the Sybase Open envisioned a match between Pete Sampras and Andre Agassi.

Instead, they'll be getting Cecil Mamiit vs. Mark Philippoussis.

Sampras withdrew from the tournament shortly before Saturday's semifinal against Philippoussis because of a strained tendon above his left ankle, depriving the \$325,000 event of its top seed and two-time champion.

Agassi, seeded second and a four-time Sybase champion, was defaulted from his second-round match against Mamiit three days earlier because of a virus.

That left Mamiit, a qualifier ranked 120th in the world, facing the third-seed-

ed Philippoussis in Sunday's final.

Sampras, playing in his first tournament after a 10-week layoff that was his longest since high school, hurt his leg during his quarterfinal victory over Bernd Karbacher on Friday night.

"I hit a forehand and was caught off balance," Sampras said. "I felt it in one sudden movement. I continued to play on it, but it was quite sore." Sampras said he tried to practice Saturday morning, but couldn't run.

"I couldn't put any weight on it," Sampras said. "I didn't feel like I could have played a proper match. It hurt on any movement. It didn't make any sense." Sampras said he still hopes to play in a tournament in Scottsdale, Arizona, in two weeks.

Mamiit, trying to become first qualifier to win the Sybase Open title, had never gotten past the second round of an ATP tour event before this week. In fact, he had just two career ATP tour victories before the Sybase Open, in which he already has four — including the default by Agassi.

Mamiit advanced to the final by defeating fourth-seeded Michael Chang 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Mamiit, who turned pro after winning the NCAA singles championship in 1996 as a Freshman at Southern California, said he grew up admiring Chang — who won his first tournament title when Mamiit was 11 years old.

"I watched his game and followed his tactics," Mamiit said.

"I was pretty pumped up."

Mamiit fell behind 5-0 in the first set before he relaxed.

Then he held serve the rest of the way, and began to take charge when he broke Chang's serve in the fourth game of the second set.

"When I missed a few shots, I started to get a little tentative," Chang said. "I wasn't as aggressive as I should have been. Cecil is playing some good tennis right now." Mamiit, who at 5-foot-8 (1.7 metres) is 8 inches (20 centimetres) shorter than Philippoussis, broke Chang's serve in the first game of the third set and held on for the win.

"I'm not too excited about the final," Mamiit said. "I probably should be, but I'm trying to keep it low key. After match point, I felt relaxed. I've gained one of my goals."

Golmard ousts Moya to reach final

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The last seed in the Dubai Open fell Saturday when Frenchman Jerome Golmard defeated No. 2 Carlos Moya to reach his first ATP Tour final ever.

"It's like a dream. I have dreamt for a long time of a moment like this," said Golmard, who fought off a one-set deficit to clinch a 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 victory.

The Spaniard admitted that he relaxed a little after winning the first set and let Golmard back into the match.

"I was in a good position to win the match after the first set. He was hitting hard and didn't do many mistakes," said Moya.

Play in the other semifinal between Andre Ilie and Nicolas Kiefer was suspended due to rain until Sunday. Kiefer was leading 6-3.

Moya broke in the third game and maintained his pressure to win the first set without much difficulty.

The 25-year-old Golmard, who had earlier ousted fifth seed Karol Kucera and third seed Tim Henman, broke Moya in the fourth game of the second set and then held serve to take a 4-1 lead before Moya broke back to even it at 4-4.

The match appeared to be heading to a tie-break but Golmard, leading 6-5 and tending to an injured elbow with an ice pack in between games, broke Moya to take the set 7-5.

Moya's game fell apart in the third set with Golmard breaking in the first game. Moya immediately broke back, but the Frenchman, who was serving well throughout the two-hour match, broke to take a 4-1 lead and didn't look back.

Moya served 13 aces, the majority of which came in the second set and admitted that he was not very comfortable playing the left-handed Golmard.

"His serve is good and he



Nicolas Kiefer of Germany smiles after defeating Andre Ilie of Australia, during their Dubai Tennis Open semifinal match on Monday. Kiefer defeated Ilie 6-3, 7-6(8/6) (AFP photo)

is a lefty. I hate playing lefties," said Moya. Golmard said that his main goal is to reach the top 30 in the world. "I didn't have anything to lose, unlike Carlos, who has to think of ranking points," said the 61st-ranked player.

Aussie Steggall wins slalom

VAIL, Colorado (AP) — In a second-run free-for-all, it was a skier from Down Under who went over the top.

Australia's Zali Steggall forged a blistering second run to vault from sixth place and capture the women's slalom Saturday in the World Alpine Ski Championships.

Steggall, only .13 seconds off the pace following a tightly bunched first run, nailed the bottom half of her second run and had a combined time of 1 minute, 33.97 seconds — an impressive .80 seconds ahead of Sweden's Pernilla Wiberg.

Norway's Trine Bakke, the first-run leader, took the bronze medal.

It was Australia's first gold medal in world championship history and its first medal of any kind since Malcolm Milne won bronze in downhill in the 1970 worlds.

Steggall, who became the first Australian woman to win a World Cup race when she triumphed in slalom at Park City, Utah, in November 1997 and who was bronze medalist in slalom in the 1998 Olympics, prevailed after a first run that saw the top 10 racers separated by only .28 seconds.

Wiberg, tied with Steggall after a 46.44-second first run, moved into the lead with a solid 48.33 clocking for a total of 1:34.77.

The 24-year-old Steggall, skiing next, was .31 seconds slower than Wiberg through the first intermediate clocking but was fast and flawless through the bottom half and was timed in 47.53.

"I was pretty amazed when I crossed the finish line," Steggall said. "I had heard a huge cheer for Pernilla when I was standing in the start and I said, 'Well, OK, she's done it again, a good second run.' So I said, 'Well, I better do it, too.'"

"I knew that I didn't have a chance in the top part because it's really not my cup of tea. I was just waiting to get over that last pitch, because that was where I was



Australia's Zali Steggall, center, the gold medal winner, is flanked by Sweden's Pernilla Wiberg, left, silver, and the bronze medalist Norway's Trine Bakke, following the Women's Slalom at the World Alpine Ski Championships in Vail, Colo, Saturday (AP photo)

going to be able to make it up.

"I actually heard (via the public address system) that I was behind (at the intermediate clocking). I knew that I really had to nail the steep and just risk, keep that speed moving down the hill," Steggall, who for the past 10 years has spent half of her time in the Northern Hemisphere and the other half in the Southern Hemisphere and thus has experienced "20 winters in a row," knows the value of taking a break. She took 10 days off before her bronze medal in the '98 Olympics, and took 10 days off before this event.

"I think I'll definitely make it a regular event now," she said of those breaks from skiing.

Twenty skiers were within one second of the lead in the first run, prompting Wiberg to say, "I've never experienced a race that was this close. I'll have to be satisfied with the silver today. It was amazing to see Zali ski that last steep. She really got the line." Bakke struggled late in

her run, and her 48.69 time gave her a combined 1:35.00.

Although she didn't maintain her first-run lead, Bakke insisted that she "won" a bronze medal. "I've only been on the podium twice before, so I'm very happy with making it onto the podium today," she said.

Norway's Andrine Flemmen, silver medalist in giant slalom on Thursday, charged from 13th place after the first run to finish fourth in 1:35.06. She had the second-fastest second run of 48.17.

Finland's Riitta Pitkanen was fifth in 1:35.12, followed by Austria's Karin Koelliker in 1:35.22 and Slovenia's Urška Hrovat in 1:35.23.

Italy's Deborah Compagnoni, the defending world champion in slalom, finished a disappointing eighth in 1:35.33. Compagnoni trailed Bakke by only .04 seconds in the first run.

Austria's Anita Wachter was ninth in 1:35.34, and Canada's Allison Forsyth took 10th in 1:35.59.

Slovenia's Alenka Dovzan, just .02 seconds behind Bakke in the first heat, had a slow second run to finish 12th. Teammate Spela Premar, who trailed Bakke by only .03 seconds, straddled a gate at the top of the final steep and did not finish.

Austria's Sabine Egger, leader of this season's World Cup slalom standings, also straddled a gate on her second run.

Kristina Koznick of Burnsville, Minn., America's top hope for a medal in these championships, caught an edge and hooked a tip, failing to finish her first run.

Also going out on the first run were Sweden's Anja Paerson and Germany's Martina Ertl.

Bakke's bronze gave Norway eight medals in these championships, trailing Austria's 12.

Wiberg gave Sweden its second medal. She was one of the favorites in this race after winning the combined title with a come-from-behind victory in slalom and finishing fourth in giant slalom.

French World Cup coach takes charge of FIFA All Stars

SYDNEY (AFP) — French World Cup winning coach Aime Jacquet was Sunday appointed to handle the FIFA All Stars against the Australian Soccerroos at the official opening of Sydney's Olympic Stadium.

Jacquet, who coached France to win last year's World Cup final against

Brazil, is expected to announce his first squad by the end of this month and the final squad in April for the match on June 12.

Soccer Australia chairman Basil Scarsella said the appointment indicated the seriousness of FIFA regarding the match.

"At least 28 other sports have put up their hand to be

involved in the official opening of the stadium and we're delighted to have this honour," Scarsella said.

Approaches had already been made to stars such as Ronaldo, Michael Owen, Zinedine Zidane and Christian Vieri as well as Australians Mark Bosnich, Harry Kewell and Mark Viduka to play in the

match, said Olympics Minister Michael Knight.

It will be the first Olympic sport to be staged at the stadium.

Officials hope to fill the 110,000 capacity ground with a programme involving an official opening ceremony, entertainment and the world match.

Atletico de Madrid falls to Espanyol

MADRID (AP) — Dario Silva scored with six minutes left to play and led Espanyol to a 2-1 victory Saturday over Atletico de Madrid in Spanish first-division soccer.

It was the fourth straight loss for Atletico and prompted some of the 20,000 fans braving bitter

cold weather at Vicente Calderon stadium to scream for the resignation of coach Arrigo Sacchi.

Atletico got on the board first as Jose Maria Romero fought off two defenders to score in the 21st minute. But Espanyol tied the game in the 38th minute on a

header by Moises Arteaga and won the game in the final minutes with a header by Silva.

In other action Saturday, Leonardo Biagini of Argentina converted a penalty in the 64th minute to lead Mallorca to a 1-0 victory over Real Sociedad.

And Jose Oscar Flores

scored in the 50th minute to lead Deportivo la Coruna hosts to a 1-0 win over Salamanca.

The highlight of the weekend is Sunday's game between first-place FC Barcelona and Real Madrid in Camp Nou stadium in the Catalan capital.

Larsson doubles up with treble

GLASGOW (AFP) — Henrik Larsson grabbed his second hat-trick on successive Saturdays as Celtic demolished Dunfermline 4-0 to cruise into the Scottish Cup fifth round on Saturday.

The dreadlocked Swede struck all three in a devastating 15-minute spell before the interval that also featured a fourth for Norwegian striker Harald Brattbakk.

Already lauded by his coach Jozef Venglos as one of the finest players in Europe after his treble against Hearts last week, Larsson plundered goals number 24, 25 and 26 of a highly productive season.

The hat-trick killed the tie as a contest and ended any hope Dunfermline had of avoiding another heavy

defeat after two 5-0 reverses at Parkhead in the Premier League already this term.

Celtic coach Jozef Venglos was generous in his praise for the visitors' efforts in the opening half hour, but the roof caved in for the Pars after Larsson's 27th-minute opener.

"Henrik was outstanding again," said Celtic coach Jozef Venglos. "He is playing excellently himself but the other players are close to him and he is working hard for the team. That is a strong part of his personality."

Dunfermline boss Dick Campbell praised his side for taking the match to the Scottish champions in the first half hour, but admitted that Larsson was unstoppable.

"I thought we had eight chances but we were beaten by a world-class goal from Larsson's header," said Campbell.

"We then switched off and you can't afford to do that against Celtic. They were worthy winners and I wish them all the best for the Cup."

But there were no setbacks for the Premier division teams as results in other matches followed the form book.

St. Johnstone won 3-1 at division two leaders Livingston while Motherwell beat second division Stirling 2-0.

Scottish Premier division leaders Rangers have the chance to reach the last eight when they travel to first division Hamilton on Sunday.

Defending Makinen wins

KARLSTAD, Sweden (AP) — Defending world champion Tommi Makinen of Finland held off Carlos Sainz of Spain by 18 seconds Sunday to win the fourth straight year in a Toyota. Only Swedish and Finnish drivers have won the rally.

It was the third victory for Makinen in the Swedish event and his second straight in this year's world championship series.

Last month, the Mitsubishi driver won the Monte Carlo Rally.

Sainz, a former two-time world champion trying to become the first non-Nordic winner of the rally in its 47-year history, finished runner-up for the fourth straight year in a Toyota. Only Swedish and Finnish drivers have won the rally.

Sweden's Thomas Radstrom, driving the only Ford Focus left in the competition, placed third only seconds ahead of France's Didier Auriol.

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Mass ultra-Orthodox protest against Israeli court

TEL AVIV (AFP) — A quarter of a million ultra-Orthodox Jews crowded the streets of occupied Jerusalem on Sunday to protest the supreme court's support for religious pluralism in the largest-ever rally by Israel's influential minority of strictly observant Jews.

Billed as a "prayer conference against persecution," the protest brought together some 250,000 men — solemnly attired in long black coats that called to mind centuries past — who chanted slogans against the court.

"Stop the incitement of the supreme court" and "the supreme court represents the elite," they shouted as small children barely able to walk mingled among them.

The ultra-Orthodox pulled out all the stops to mobilise their supporters, chartering about a thousand buses to ferry demonstrators to the rally and even permitting religious students to interrupt their studies to take part.

As Oriental and Hassidic religious music played in the background and rabbis read chapters from the Psalms, the throng of men gathered at one side of Jerusalem's old bus station at the western entrance to the city while women in modest dress stood separately on the other.

The rally was attended by top Jewish religious leaders including Ashkenazi chief Rabbi Israel Lau, his Sephardi counterpart Eliahu Bakshi-Doron and the spiritual leader of the Oriental Jews, Ovadia

Yosef.

Meanwhile, some 50,000 secular Jews, mainly youths, staged a counter-demonstration in a park near the court in support of the rule of law and democratic values.

At the centre of the debate is the supreme court, which has become the scapegoat of the ultra-Orthodox for rulings that have challenged the monopoly of the rabbinate over conversions to Judaism and other aspects of religious life.

Some rabbis have even accused the court's chief justice, Aharon Barak, of being a "persecutor of Jews."

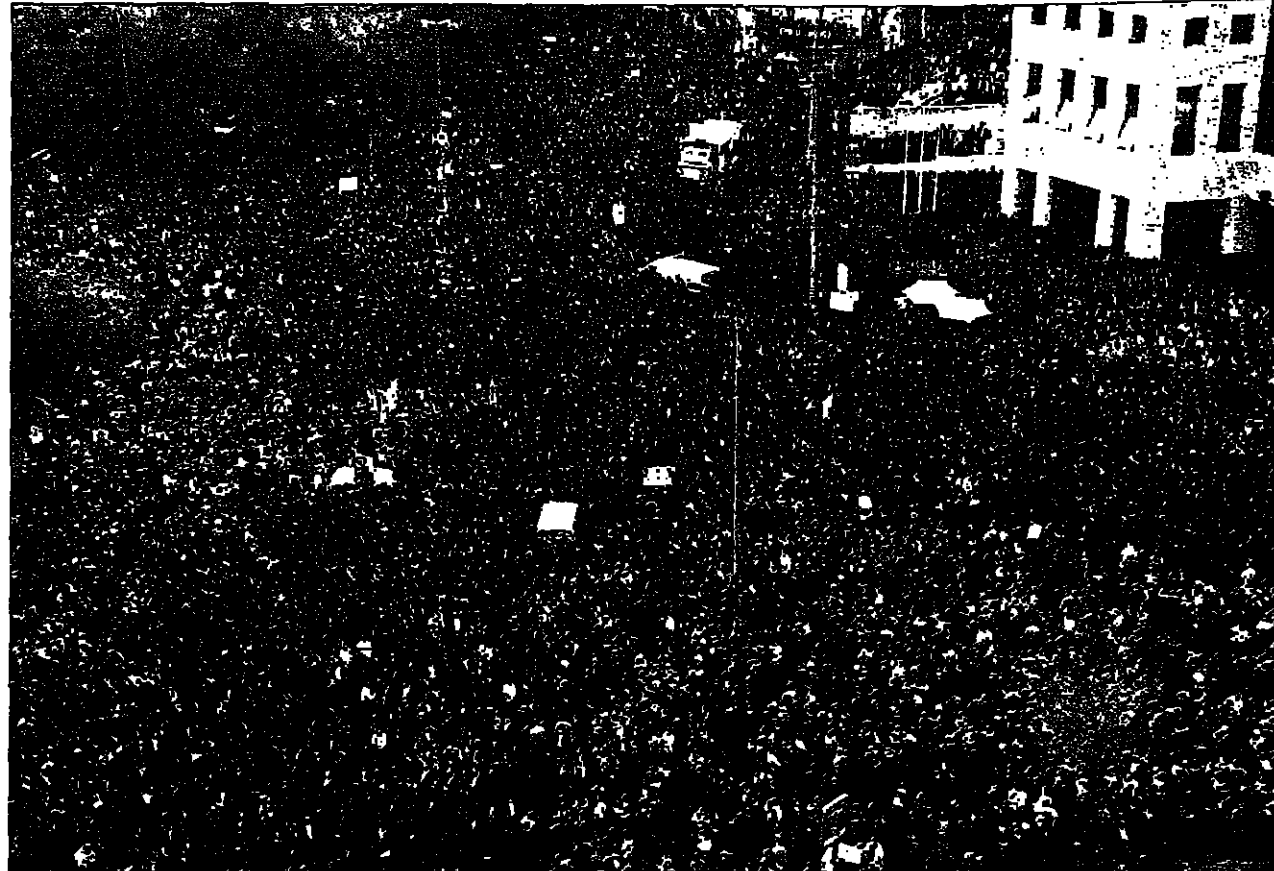
Sunday's rally marked the first time that the whole of the ultra-Orthodox camp has directly challenged the country's legal system in a bid to place religious tradition above the concept of the rule of law in the Jewish state.

Meanwhile, secular Jews organising the counter-demonstration said their rally was being staged to "prevent Israel becoming another Iran."

"There is a war in Israel. It's a question of life and death and we are going to ensure the life of democracy," said Avraham Burg, secretary general of the Jewish Agency.

"Hitler did not ask who is a reform Jew and who is Orthodox," said Burg in his opening remarks at the counter-demonstration.

Hardcore Jews, who live in strict conformity with ancient Jewish religious law, make up only about seven per cent of Israel's five million-strong



More than a quarter million demonstrators crowd the centre of occupied Jerusalem Sunday during a protest against the Israeli supreme court, which angered ultra-Orthodox Jews by a series of rulings supporting religious pluralism (AFP photo)

Jewish population.

But the growing power in recent years of ultra-Orthodox political parties — who had a dominant voice in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's outgoing government — has greatly deepened the secular-religious divide.

The ultra-Orthodox claim that the Reform and Conservative movements, which permit a more relaxed interpretation of religious duties and allow marriages to non-Jews, are fostering assimilation and threatening the future of the Jewish people.

"The courts cannot force us to recognise the legitimacy of reform Judaism which is totally against religion," demonstrated Asha Weiss told AFP.

"The court takes the side of the rich people," another demonstrator said.

Both demonstrations were peaceful, but police said a 19-year-old U.S. member of the

outlawed anti-Arab Kach movement was arrested for incitement as the crowds were dispersing.

All the major universities in Israel, including Bar-Ilan, a religious university near Tel Aviv, suspended classes on Sunday to express solidarity with the supreme court.

Russia in secret arms deals with Iraq — report

LONDON (Agencies) — Russia has signed arms deals worth more than \$163 million with Baghdad to reinforce Iraq's air defences, a British newspaper reported on Sunday.

The Sunday Telegraph, citing diplomatic sources in Moscow, said the move would pose a serious threat to British and U.S. planes enforcing the no-fly zones in Iraq.

In a blatant breach of the U.N. arms embargo, Russia has agreed to upgrade and overhaul Iraq's ageing squadrons of MiG fighters and restore the country's air defences to combat readiness, the newspaper said.

In Moscow, the duty officer at the Russian Foreign Ministry said there would be "no official response" Sunday, but the ministry might comment Monday.

Speaking in France at the Kosovo peace talks on Sunday, Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov denied the report, saying that Russia was abiding strictly by its commitments on U.N. resolutions concerning Iraq, and that the resolutions do not provide for the supply of arms to Iraq.

Russia's NTV television news reported that officials at the MIG production facility said they "knew nothing" about the reported deal.

Allied patrols of the no-fly zones, which cover more than half of Iraq and are designed to protect Iraq's Kurdish minority in the north and Shiite population in the south, have triggered almost daily clashes since a four-day air campaign in December to punish Baghdad for failing to comply with U.N. weapons inspections.

The Iraqi armed forces have failed to shoot down any allied warplanes because they have

to rely on outdated and unreliable equipment.

However, the Russian deal to upgrade Iraq's air force and anti-aircraft batteries will bring the Middle Eastern country's air defences up to pre-Gulf War levels, said the Sunday Telegraph.

Apart from earning much-needed foreign currency, Russia's decision to provide Iraq with military assistance was approved by Prime Minister Yegor Gerasimov in retaliation for the Desert Fox air campaign in December, said the newspaper.

Russia bitterly opposed launching air strikes against Iraq, an old ally of Moscow.

British Foreign Office officials confirmed to the Sunday Telegraph that the deals had been approved by Moscow.

"It is almost beyond belief that a permanent member of the [U.N.] Security Council could authorise such a flagrant breach of the U.N. arms embargo," said a senior Foreign Office official.

"It indicates that Russian relations with Iraq have become a great deal closer since Mr. Primakov became prime minister."

Details of the arms deals between Moscow and Baghdad have also been passed to the State Department in Washington, where officials have been alerted to be on the look-out for evidence of arms trading between Russia and Iraq, the newspaper said.

According to the Sunday Telegraph, Iraq's Transport and Communications Minister Ahmad Murada Ahmad Khail signed the arms deals in Moscow on Jan. 13 and 14 after a visit to Russia by Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, in December, days before Operation Desert Fox was launched.

Iraq urges U.N. to stop U.S. attacks, slams arms panels

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq urged the United Nations on Sunday to halt U.S. and British air strikes and said the U.N. panels set up to review links with Baghdad after a two-month hiatus were a "waste of time."

Diplomats posted here, meanwhile, said the "war of attrition in the air" between Washington and Baghdad was likely to continue until a solution to the Iraqi crisis takes shape at the United Nations.

The United Nations "must intervene immediately to call on parties involved to halt the aggression," said Iraq's ruling Baath Party.

At Thawra, the party's newspaper, said the attacks in "no-fly" zones over southern and northern Iraq since December amounted to a "flagrant violation of the U.N. Charter, international law and Security Council resolutions."

"Nothing in the Security Council resolutions authorises the United States and Britain or any other country to impose these air exclusion zones," the newspaper insisted.

At Thawra accused Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey of playing "an active role in the aggression" by allowing U.S. and British warplanes to use their bases and airspace.

The Arab League should also take action, it said.

Six civilians have been killed and several others wounded in a new escalation of air strikes on Iraq since Thursday, according to Iraqi authorities.

Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz vowed last week that Iraq would continue to challenge the U.S.-led overflights, "no matter what the sacrifices and the consequences."

With neither side ready to back down, President Saddam Hussein is determined to combat the overflights to prove his forces can still defend the country in the wake of the Desert Fox air war, diplomats said.

"In the eyes of its people, Iraq is trying to demonstrate that it still has the capacity to defend the country's integrity and sovereignty," a high-ranking Western diplomat said.

He saw no early end to the clashes.

"The tension in the exclusion zones will continue, perhaps until the prospect of a solution to Iraq emerges within the Security Council," the diplomat said.

But Aziz said Sunday the three U.N. panels unveiled in New York on Friday were a "waste of time" and an obstacle to Baghdad's campaign to secure a lifting of sanctions.

"The work of these commissions does not concern us. Iraq is not a participant in this game," he said in an interview published by the Emirati newspaper Al Khaleej.

Aziz said the panels were set up to conceal divisions within the Security Council, between the United States and Britain which take a hard line and Russia and France which are more sympathetic toward Baghdad.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Iraq 'capable' of striking bases

BAGHDAD (AFP) — President Saddam Hussein said Sunday that Iraq is capable of striking bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia using British and U.S. planes to carry out attacks against Iraq. "With God's help and the support of the Arab World as well as patriots in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, we are capable of attacking the bases which are a departure point for aggressions" against us, he said in a statement following a meeting here with top advisers. Saddam said the statement, quoted by the official INA news agency, was a "warning to leaders in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait that they are unmistakably implicated in the hateful war" against Iraq.

Two Spanish banks bombed

VITORIA (AFP) — Two banks were slightly damaged overnight when homemade bombs exploded in front of them in the Basque town of Vitoria, while a Bilbao Conservative official received a death threat letter, police said Sunday. The small bombs, made up of gas cylinders, went off in front of two branches of Banco Bilbao Vizcaya, causing slight damage, police said. A leading councillor of Spain's ruling Conservative Party (PP) in a suburb of the northern Basque town of Bilbao received a death threat letter on Sunday, the party said. The anonymous letter contained a photo of Manuel Zamarrero, a PP councillor murdered by the armed Basque separatist group ETA in June last year, with the message that the "same fate" awaited the Bilbao councillor.

'Pressure on PNA led to rise in abuses'

GAZA CITY (AP) — Israel's security demands on the Palestinians resulted in a rise in human rights violations by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in 1998, a human rights group said Sunday. The authority cracked down on the Palestinian opposition soon after Israel and the Palestinians signed the U.S.-brokered Wye River land-for-security agreement in October 1998, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said in a summary of its annual report. The Gaza Strip-based group said Wye — and subsequent Israeli demands — apparently prompted waves of arrests of members of the Islamist group Hamas and placed restrictions on freedom of speech and movement.

'Algerian grave contains 40 bodies'

ALGIERS (AFP) — A mass grave unearthed near the Algerian capital could contain the remains of some 40 people killed by armed Islamist extremists, the daily Al Khabar newspaper said Sunday. No bodies have yet been recovered from the wells in Ouled Aïk which were found Tuesday to contain human remains after a "repentant" Islamist tipped off security services, the paper said. Several months ago, the Algerian press reported that two other mass graves had been found in the same area, part of the "triangle of death" where armed groups committed dozens of attacks and massacres between 1993 and 1995.

Palestinian, U.S. officials to hold talks

JERICHO (AFP) — A high-ranking Palestinian delegation was to leave for the United States on Sunday to take part in the first meeting of a Palestinian-U.S. joint commission, officials said. The Palestinian delegation will be headed by Mahmoud Abbas, Yasser Arafat's chief deputy, and will include Planning and International Cooperation Minister Nabil Shaath and Saeb Erakat, the main peace negotiator with Israel, they said. Erakat said the delegation is to meet with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Martin Indyk on Monday. The commission will be meeting for the first time since it was unveiled in November by Arafat and U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Mufti says Israel trying to expel him

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The mufti of Jerusalem, Akram Sabri, said Sunday that Israel was trying to expel him from Jerusalem. "The Israeli police told the Waqf [the administration of Islamic affairs] that I have to move out of my Jerusalem office," the mufti — the official in charge of the affairs of Palestinian Muslims — told AFP. "This is an interference from the radical right in Israel in our religious affairs. I am not a politician, but rather a clergyman — we reject this interference," Sabri added. The Israeli police told AFP that they would investigate the mufti's allegations. Sabri was appointed by Palestinian President Yasser Arafat almost four years ago and is officially a member of the PNA.

Horn of Africa war spreads as Yemen announces mediation bid

ADDIS ABABA (AFP) —

The border war between Eritrea and Ethiopia spread to the eastern front Sunday as Yemen invited the two Horn of Africa countries to peace talks in Sanaa.

Eritrea said it downed an Ethiopian attack helicopter, killing all aboard.

Addis Ababa acknowledged the loss of the helicopter, but said warplanes and other helicopters had returned safely to base as artillery gunners duelled.

"Two enemy tanks have been destroyed and a large water tank has been demolished," an Ethiopian communiqué said, adding that Ethiopian troops had inflicted heavy casualties on the Eritreans.

The Eritrean foreign ministry for its part accused Ethiopia of launching air and artillery attacks on the front at dawn.

It said in a communiqué that the helicopter it downed was an Mi-24 gunship "that came to strafe the front line."

"All the crew were killed as the helicopter crashed behind the front line," the Eritrean communiqué said.

In Sanaa, Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul Kader Bajajmal was quoted by the official SABA news agency as saying the proposed peace talks would be aimed at "a friendly dialogue, starting peaceful negotiations to discuss proposed regional and international initiatives."

Yemen "is very worried by the military escalation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and calls on the two countries to end their military operations which will only bring more misery and destruction," the minister said.

Eritrean Transport Minister Saleh Keldia invited Yemen to mediate in the conflict on Feb. 6, saying the country was a friend to both Eritrea and Ethiopia and could play an important role in ending the "senseless" conflict.

His plea came despite the fact that Eritrean troops clashed with Yemeni soldiers over the Hanish islands in the Red Sea in 1995. An international court subsequently awarded the islands to Yemen.

Battles between Ethiopia and Eritrea resumed on Feb. 6 after

seven months of relative calm, and Sunday's fighting broke at least two days of calm along the 1,000-kilometre border.

Previous battles in this round of fighting were confined to the western and central fronts.

Both sides signed a U.S.-brokered agreement to halt airstrikes in June last year, but Ethiopia last week acknowledged sending fighter-bombers into action to support ground troops on Monday and Tuesday.

Eritrea warned on Friday that it reserved the right to use its own air force if Ethiopia continued airstrikes.

The two armies have massed more than half a million troops along the border, backed up by hundreds of field guns and tanks.

One foreign expert in Asmara with access to independent information told AFP that on the eastern front: "The Ethiopians began the show, but we don't understand what they're aiming at."

He said three Ethiopian Antonov-130s bombed objectives close to the front, centred on the town of Burie, 70 kilometres south of Eritrea's Red Sea port of Assab.

But experts said there were no indications that the Ethiopians had massed a force capable of punching through and on to Assab, whereas the Eritreans have deployed 65,000 troops on the eastern front, which is the most distant from Asmara and the most difficult region for them.

It is suitable for tank warfare, but the experts said the Ethiopians might hesitate to use their Bulgarian-made T-55s, because the heavy armour which has been added makes them so heavy that their engines have a hard time coping.

The front is close to the border with Djibouti, landlocked Ethiopia's lifeline to the sea, and thus a strategic pressure point.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) has presented an 11-point peace plan, endorsed by the U.N. Security Council, which provides notably for Eritrea to withdraw from disputed positions, the deployment of peacekeepers, and neutral delineation of the border.

Other papers also expressed support for killing Rushdie and accused the West of using his case to put pressure on Iran.

"We are sure that even those who have never harmed any living creature in their lives would like to kill this beast, not for the sake of the bounty on his head, but so that in the future nobody may dare to repeat what this disgraceful and shameful character has done," said the English-language Tehran Times.

The West, particularly Britain, is using the issue as an instrument for putting pressure on Iran," the paper's editorial said.

Iranian foundation says Rushdie death sentence will be carried out

TEHRAN (AFP) — An Iranian religious foundation insisted Sunday that the death sentence against British author Salman Rushdie will be carried out, upping the political stakes on the 10th anniversary of the fatwa which still bedevils Iran's relations with the West.

"The idea of Rushdie's annihilation is more alive than ever," said Ayatollah Hassan Sane'i, president of the Khordad-15 Foundation, which has placed a \$2.8 million bounty on Rushdie's head.

"Iran is serious about defending this historic fatwa and wants to see it applied," he told the hardline daily Jomhuri-Isfahani.

Sane'i insisted that Iran's reformist government had no right to question the validity of the death sentence imposed on Rushdie by the late revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

An announcement by Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi in New York last September that the Iranian government would do nothing to implement the 10-year-old death sentence had prompted Britain to announce its readiness to normalise ties.

Jomhuri-Isfahani published an entire special supplement dedicated to the anniversary of the fatwa containing calls from conservative and hardline religious leaders for the death sentence to be carried out.

Lifting the fatwa imposed on Rushdie because of alleged blasphemy against Islam in his novel "The Satanic Verses" is an "illusion," said a letter from Grand Ayatollah Fazl Lankarani.

"The government of the Islamic Republic must be at the forefront of countries defending the fatwa," he said, adding: "Rushdie's book is in fact the work of the British government."

The paper stressed that no government on earth had the power to revoke a decree issued by a cleric of Khomeini's standing.

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Mystery surrounds whereabouts of 'missing' Osama Ben Laden

KABUL (AFP) — Mystery surrounds the whereabouts of alleged terrorist Osama Ben Laden, with Britain sceptical about reports by the Taliban militia that he has gone missing inside Afghanistan.

Washington said it could not confirm some reports that the man accused of masterminding last year's deadly U.S. embassy bombings had already left the country.

Diplomatic sources in Pakistan and here speculated that Ben Laden, who has been living under the Islamist mili-

tia's protection in Afghanistan, could still be in the country but trying to leave for Dubai or Iraq.

They said there were several possible destinations, including Chechnya or several isolated African countries, but logistics and a support network meant Dubai or Iraq could be ideal.

He would be travelling with an entourage consisting mainly of guards from Egypt and Turkey and would most likely follow the smugglers' route overland through either Pakistan or Iran, they said.

"From there he would take a boat to either Dubai or Iraq although it is possible he could travel overland through Iran to Iraq," one source told AFP.

Both routes are heavily used by heroin smugglers and illegal traders who ship goods from tax-free Dubai through Afghanistan and into Pakistan.

One diplomatic source in Pakistan said: "We think he could still be in Afghanistan but he will definitely be looking at getting out of the country through private support. No government will help."

"Capture would be too easy in Chechnya but in Dubai, where he has many private supporters, he could hide. News reports have said that Iraq might be prepared to take him. But could he trust Saddam Hussein?"

The source said a combination of pressure from Pakistan, British diplomacy and Ben Laden's own bad behaviour as a "welcomed guest" of the Taliban had forced him to flee.

A Pakistani intelligence source told AFP that Ben Laden was spotted on Afghan soil near the Iranian border

Friday. The source did not identify the exact location and said the Saudi millionaire's further movements were not known.

Iran denied Ben Laden was headed for Iran. The claims by the intelligence source were "irresponsible" and "regrettable," a foreign ministry spokesman said.

Taliban spokesman Tayeb Khan said Saturday: "About Sheikh Osama, we just heard today that he has gone missing and we have no idea if he is still in Afghanistan or left the country."

Cholera is sweeping southern Somalia, where at least 60 people have been confirmed and dozens are struggling to treat hundreds of infected people, a hospital director said Monday. Many more were feared to have died in the drought-stricken countryside while trying to make it to the hospital in Burdika, about 420 kilometres southwest of the Somali capital, Mogadishu.

Cholera is a deadly disease, the hospital director said, and wards were overflowing with about 250 cholera patients arriving from rural areas and nearby refugee camps. At least 60 deaths were said.

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King receives

His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan received a cable from the President of the United States, Bill Clinton, on Sunday. The cable congratulated the King on his 50th birthday and expressed the President's admiration for the King's leadership and the stability of Jordan.

Volume 24 Number

King sends condolences to Bahraini leader

The King of Jordan, Hussein, has sent a message of condolences to the late King of Bahrain, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, following his death. The message expressed the King's deep sorrow and the condolences of the Jordanian people.

Polish police seize Semtex haul

Polish police have seized a large quantity of Semtex, a powerful explosive, in a warehouse in the town of Lodz. The haul was believed to be intended for use in a terrorist attack.

Italian police seize arms stock

Italian police have seized a large quantity of arms and ammunition in a warehouse in the town of Rome. The haul was believed to be intended for use in a terrorist attack.

Cameraman arrested for links with Israel

A cameraman has been arrested in Israel for alleged links with the PLO. The arrest was part of a broader investigation into the activities of the PLO in Israel.

Jail break in Iran

A prison break has taken place in Iran, with several inmates escaping from a jail in the town of Tehran. The escapees are believed to be members of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Cholera kills at least 60 in Somalia

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